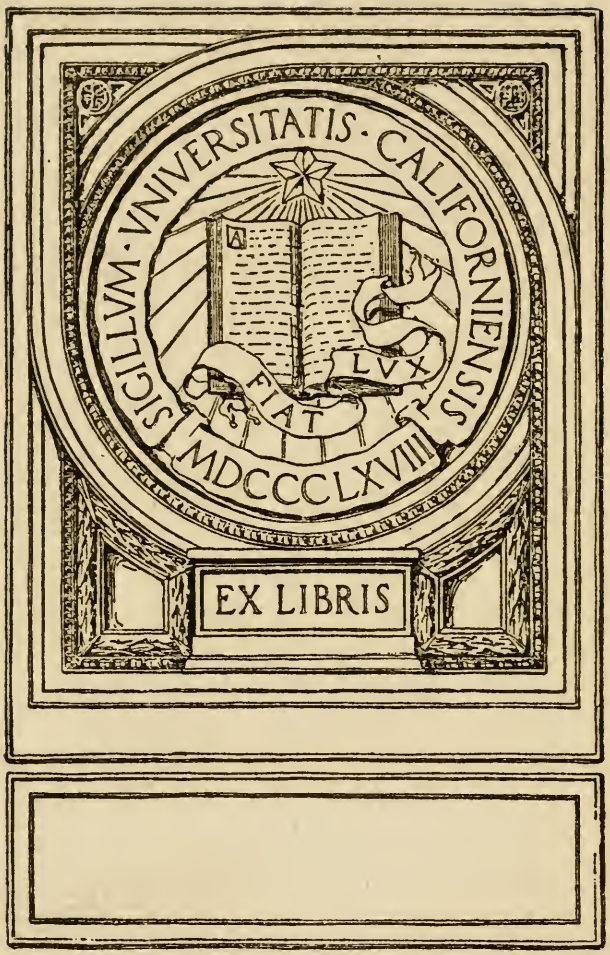
MAPLE LEAVES IN FLANDERS FIELDS

· HERBERT RAE ·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MAPLE LEAVES IN FLANDERS FIELDS

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BY

HERBERT RAE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ADMIRAL SIR ALBERT MARKHAM, K.C.B.

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INTRODUCTION

The writer of the following pages has done me the honour of inviting me to act as sponsor to his book, by adding an introduction.

Having read the contents very carefully, I have arrived at the conclusion that an introduction, especially from my pen, is absolutely unnecessary; and I am confident that the readers of this book, before they have read many pages, will cordially concur with me. Nevertheless, I have gladly and willingly consented to do so.

In the first place I would like to offer my congratulations to the author, for the charming and appropriate title he has selected for his book. No better name could have been chosen; none more suitable.

The "Maple Leaves" will, I feel sure, never wither, but will always flourish, fresh and verdant,

for many years to come over the " Fields " of the English-speaking people in every part of the civilized world.

Personally I am glad to associate myself with anything emanating from a Canadian source. I am proud to number many Canadians among my friends at the front, for all of whom I entertain a profound respect, love, and admiration; and I am therefore delighted, and honoured, in being afforded the opportunity of assisting in the launch of this latest Canadian venture on the stormy sea of literature. If I can in any way help in giving it a fair wind on its first voyage, it will be a great pleasure to me to do so.

Although all the names in this work are fictitious (including the author's), many of the persons mentioned are well known to me, and I can therefore more fully appreciate the jokes and witticisms herein related, better, perhaps, than others who are not so well known to them. The book is, practically, a narration of the experiences of some of the members belonging to the first Canadian Contingent that crossed the Atlantic to aid us in this world-wide war.

It is the story of Canadians by a Canadian, and is well and graphically told. It is written in a light and humorous style. It touches briefly on the formation of the Contingent in Canada, its organization at Valcartier, its training on Salisbury Plain, until eventually it was turned out, a finished article, ready to fight on the battle-fields of France and Flanders.

How splendidly they have fought is a matter of universal knowledge and admiration.

This should be sufficient introduction, but the book does more. It not only draws our attention, very strikingly, to the gallant fighting qualities and capabilities of our brave Canadians, but it also depicts in a most interesting fashion their love of fun, their quaint humour, their caustic wit, their typical whimsicalities, their endurance while undergoing hardships and privations of no ordinary character, their fortitude, and, above all, their determination to exhibit to the world at large, and to our enemies in particular, their loyalty to the Flag, and their intention to uphold and maintain the integrity of the Empire.

The dash and heroism they have displayed are

here pictured modestly, with much pathos and with considerable ability.

It is not for me to enlarge on their noble and gallant achievements, but I would like to draw attention to the incident related on pages 74 and 84 as illustrating the spirit and the pluck that prevail and animate the men, as shown in the heroism and death of Private Brown.

That touching event will last for all time as a glorious epic of Canadian history!

The book must be read to be appreciated; and I have no hesitation in acceding to the author's request of bestowing on it my benediction—for what it is worth—and of commending it to the notice and patronage of the reading public.

A. H. MARKHAM.

September, 1916.

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MAPLE LEAVES IN FLANDERS FIELDS

CHAPTER I

NEWS OF BATTLE

So it had come at last: the last rehearsal was finished and the curtain finally rung up. We dwellers on the coast could only hold our breath and wonder. There was a murmur in the air, and the east wind, as it came to us from across the mountains, carried with it a faint whisper, the subdued rattle of the European millions arming.

Were we to be in it, too ?

In Grant and Dover Streets, where we wandered unable to sit still in the office, men were discussing this problem. For on the Old Country's decision everything depended; no one doubted where Canada's duty would lead her. There were those of us who were " broke," and they were indeed happy; a steady job, while it lasted, meant a respite from their difficulties, immunity from importunate tradesmen, and plenty of excitement! The married men in those days had many heart-

searchings: the single men might be taken before them, or their wives might object to let them go.

The newspapers seized the opportunity and gleaned a golden harvest. Special editions appeared by the half-hour, and were as rapidly bought up. Militia officers, not yet in the glory of their war-paint, paraded the side-walks in twos and threes, or paused in groups to exchange ideas. They were authorities, pretending a knowledge which they probably did not possess, while the mere civilians hung breathless on their remarks. The clubs were crowded with anxious business men, too excited to talk business, and the bars conducted a feverish trade; while new-born tacticians and budding strategists consumed a wealth of "hooch," and propounded schemes which became more involved and impossible, with each libation poured down their thirsty throats.

In the office the telephone was seldom silent. Godley of the Cape Police and Gates of Strathcona's Horse, dropping in to see Murphy of the Sherwood Foresters, delighted the stenographer by the cheeriness of their greeting as they hammered on the office door.

Are you going to Europe? Where can I volunteer? Is there any use wiring Ottawa? Nobody waited for an answer. Belgium was in flames, that was enough; the Empire must declare war or be classed for ever with the yellow races.

Gates and Godley, wandering into the telegraph-

office, collided with Waldie of the "Rifles," slinking out unobtrusively, but with a satisfied light of accomplishment in his eye. "Just been wiring to Calgary about some oil shares," he murmured by way of explanation.

"Damned liar!" muttered Gates as they watched him walk down the street. "He's on the Ottawa racket too."

"What are you going to say?" asked Godley. "'Ex-policeman desires appointment as Colonel in Canadian Militia. Experience of three campaigns. Formerly in employ of Cape Government. Speaks Kaffir and Dutch.' How would that go?"

"Might get you a job of night-watchman in a concentration camp," answered Gates.

Coming out of the office they bumped into Pollock of the Gordons hurrying in, so preoccupied that he did not see them.

"Whither away, gentle stranger?" asked the imperturbable Godley. "Wiring money to Calgary for oil shares?"

"Oil shares be damned! I'm wiring to tell my wife to come home; she's up the coast," answered Pollock as he dashed into the office.

"I wonder," said Gates, as he and Godley strolled down the street, "if there are any honest men left in the city, or if they're all liars."

Then came the announcement, the glorious stirring news: war had been declared. Belgium, crushed beneath the heel of the invader, with its

bloodstained smoking ruins, was to be avenged. For the timid ones there was food for thought. H.M.C.S. *Spindrift* disappeared into the night; our two other naval units, the *Lark* and the *Linnet*, were said to be far away in the south. Of course, this was probably only a rumour, but as such it did not tend to add to the cheerfulness of the more timid.

There were stories of a German squadron off the coast, and we all agreed that the Olympic Hotel and the Universe Building, with its eighteen stories, would make a splendid target.

There were our submarines, thanks to the foresight of the man at the head of affairs; and hot-foot from the East big guns to command the outer harbour were hustled along the ringing metals.

During the day we walked the streets, and the nights we spent in searching out old uniforms, cleaning revolvers, and greasing boots. These were anxious moments, too, for those who paused to think, and for those who had friends and relations in the Old Country. "Where was the Fleet?" "What of the food-supply?"

But, though we were at war, few in the city realized the real import of the matter. A short, sharp campaign, the German Navy swept from the seas, a victorious British army in Flanders, and a triumphal entry into Berlin—that was our idea. The knowing militia officers, self-constituted oracles, said at most a nine months' affair, and

smiled in a sympathetic manner as though pitying the poor Germans. Others were even more optimistic, as the news from the East flashed through the message:

NAVAL BATTLE IN THE NORTH SEA.
GREAT BRITISH VICTORY!
THIRTY-TWO GERMAN WAR VESSELS SUNK!

This news, and other items as startling, filtered across the Continent, and the specials fell from the news office like leaves in autumn, and for every leaf a nickel, and for every nickel a lie. But no one cared so long as the lies were good and comforting.

All this time the recruiting-officers were busy, and would-be warriors swarmed in to swear to bear true allegiance to His Majesty. It was like an oil boom, or the subdivision of a new town site; offices sprang into existence, crowds waited at the doors, and, inside, the investors made their deposits. This was no idle punting in oil shares or mining stock; it was a solid investment in flesh and blood, with the fortune of an Empire and the future of a great Dominion in the balance.

In Grant Street the "Jocks" drove a roaring trade. With keen business ability, inherited from generations of impecunious cattle-stealing ancestors, gradually toned down to meet more modern commercial requirements, they stuck out their shingle

in the main thoroughfare. As in a well-run departmental store, they believed in window-dressing, and four stalwart kilties on the threshold bore witness to the excellence of the goods purveyed inside.

Further east the Fusiliers, with equal enterprise, sought for those who, always "agin the Government" in times of peace, are just the opposite in times of war. Green or Orange, it matters not; these little tiffs are soon forgotten when the Hun is at the gate.

On the Campus, in the dignified seclusion of their ancient armoury, sought rather than seeking, was the old regiment.

Day by day the recruits swarmed in. Such recruits were surely never seen before. The woods disgorged them, the mountains shook them clear; they deserted from the ships and the harbour, they hit the ties from across the great divide. The mines, the camps, the canneries and the orchards, all sent their share.

The Doctor, persistent, profane, particular, measured their heights and chests—this for a matter of form, for scarcely one but exceeded the requirements prescribed by many inches. But there were fingers gnawed off by frost-bite, and the axe had taken its toll of many toes, and these deficiencies had to be carefully sorted out and weighed in the balance.

Pete Sornson from Fort Charles was deficient of a hand, and kept the stump carefully concealed

behind his back, until told to spread his fingers out. That ditched him! Andie Mack from Squamish, with a wooden leg, the result of a badly primed dynamite cartridge, kept the fact concealed until told to take his trousers down. Private Purdy, late of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who had suffered from blistered knees on the banks of the Modder, insisted on seeing ten spots where there were only five. Fresh air and exercise was his portion, until such time as he was sober enough to see his way through the eyesight test.

There were lumbermen and railwaymen, prospectors, surveyors, bankers, brokers, stokers, teamsters, carpenters, and schoolmasters. Many had not seen a city for months, and they were frequently drunk; but the material! Grosvenor the much harassed adjutant's eyes sparkled as he looked at them. "Guardsmen every one of them! Doc, you silly old ass! what do you mean by ploughing that man?"

"He's got flat-feet."

"Flat-feet be blowed! He walked two hundred miles to join!"

The great majority were Canadian or Old Country born, but there were Americans, who were not too proud to fight, Australians hankering after a contract and muttering about their "Union." There were Russians, Frenchmen, Indians, and Servians.

Japanese and Hindoos also presented themselves, but regarding them we had no instructions.

"What are you doing here?" This to a grizzled veteran of juvenile appearance, but doubtful age.

"I want to 'list."

"I thought you were in Egypt with Wolseley—at least, you wore the medals at the last Paardeberg dinner."

"Well, I haven't got them on now. What's the age limit?"

"Forty-three."

"Well, I'm just forty-two."

"Then you must have been a drummer-boy at Tel-el-kebir."

Thus the work went on, The Colonel swore them in, the Doctor sweated, and the Adjutant danced on everyone all round. Then a serious mandate came through from the East, the all-powerful East, where the wise men sat and where all our eyes were turned. No married man was to join the Expeditionary Force without first obtaining his wife's permission. In certain cases I do not doubt that this was easily procured, but in others—No! Yet the women were not slow to do their part, and in the light of after-events some must remember this. A few words on a scrap of paper, a stroke of the pen, that was all.

Few, I expect, thought what it would mean, yet many women must be proud to-day, to think how they gave their all.

Most of the men wanted foreign service; a few stuck out for home defence. Theirs was the harder lot; ties of family or business kept them where at the moment they least desired to be. Some hoped to come later; others knew that they must stay.

The officers waited near the door of the drill hall, catching the likely ones as they sauntered in. Captain John Wallace, long, lean and leathery, spoke to them in dulcet tones, as befitting one who combined a city councillorship with the sale of water frontage.

A good soldier, John; he might have been a Jesuit, and would have made a hit as a private detective. We called him "Honest John" when we got to know him better, but as he stood at the armoury door, and filled the ranks of his company with all the best men; his brother officers referred to him as the "Pirate" and the "Thief."

Corporal McQueen, poet, philosopher, and thinker, six feet three of measured humour, aided and abetted him in his nefarious practices. Corporal McQueen ought to have been rejected on about twenty-seven different medical grounds, including old age and club-feet, but Honest John said—No!

Everyone was busy. The smartest men were snapped up the moment they set foot in the hall. The best seemed to go into the machine-gun team, already known as the suicide club. The pioneer

sergeant was on the look out for carpenters; the sergeant cook for French chefs.

Enter a stetson hat, a sunburnt face, two grey eyes, a red knotted handkerchief, and a bunch of muscle. The apparition salutes with the snap of a steel trap and stands smartly to attention, answering to the name of Edwin Fearless.

"Where do you come from?" inquires the delighted Captain Grosvenor, joy shining in his eyes.

"Mexico, sir. Been running a bit of gaspipe for Villa. He called it a machine-gun."

"Any previous experience?"

"Yes, sir: Cambridge Bugshooters, French Foreign Legion, and Natal Carbineers."

"All right; you'll report to the machine-gun squad."

Exit the hat.

Enter a six foot two of ancient edifice, gone at the knees, spavined and stringhalt in both hind-legs.

"Where do you come from?"

"Ladies' bathing beach, Point Jackson."

"The devil! What do you do there?"

"Save lives."

"Sure you don't mean souls? All right; report to the medical detail."

Any old thing does for the poultice wallopers. They and the sanitary squad are the despised and

rejected of men. Never mind, the time will come when the destructive combatant forces will look to the constructive ability of the medical unit, and thank the gods that there are men there with knowledge and determination, sufficient to pick up the pieces and snatch bodies from the firing-line.

We now walk about openly in uniform. This is a great improvement. Only a few months ago we had slunk down under cover of the night, to help in quelling the coal strike. Butchers we were called, and the small boys—ay, and some of the larger ones, too—shouting after us in the street, named us hired assassins. But that was months ago; and some of these same miners are the first to enlist.

Lieutenant Puddiphat, hovering in the shadow of the gateway, suddenly observes an acquaintance, —a recalcitrant street-car conductor and a noted stump-orator with socialistic tendencies.

"Hullo, Rakes, you here?"

"Yes; why not?"

"Oh, I thought you weren't in favour of this sort of thing. This is going to be war, and I thought war wasn't a plank in your platform."

"Not a war in the ordinary way; this is different. I'm just as keen as you are to get after Kaiser Bill."

The days passed with hard work, and every night the tired officers returned home, meant we were

nearer the end. Gradually, as the days wore on, order arose out of disorder. The hour of departure was now drawing near. Outside on the square, officers were drilling their companies. The signallers, climbing to the summit of the Universe Building, exchanged views with their confrères on the parade ground below. The machine-guns coughed and spat at cavalry, infantry, and other units, always advancing in mass formation at a diverse number of yards' distance. The medical detail marched and counter-marched, and tied up devastating wounds and set fractures in front of an admiring audience of small boys, hobos, and Chinks.*

At nights there were the marches through the city by Grant Street and down to Indian Bay, and the return to the drill-hall with the band playing the old regimental tune,

> " The ninetieth is going away,
> And what will all the ladies say ?"

and so on with blaring trombones, and all sorts of complications threatening in the near future.

There were more things to be thought of than going to Germany, for in those days we never imagined that we were going anywhere else. Troops had to be sent to different places along the coast, and garrisons provided for various

* Canadian for " Chinaman."

strategic points. Behold Captain John Wallace, Lieutenant Bob Beaufort, and the Doctor, departing in the sma' hours of the morning, on board of various barges, with mysterious consignments of cargoes, for "*somewhere*" up the coast. The idea of war, the sealed nature of the orders, did not in any way affect the spirits of the three officers and sixty other ranks. A delightful day for a cruise, and the knowledge that this for many days might be their last look on the waters of the Sound. Other troops went up north to places on the coast, and detachments left for the interior to guard the railway line.

The Jocks stole a march on us, and received their orders to leave for the East before us, so we went down to bid them *bon voyage*. Very fit they looked as they marched to the station, through a crowd such as the city had never seen before. We were all jealous that they should go first, but we knew, by that time, that we were to follow in two days, so it was merely *au revoir*. All through the Empire these same scenes were being enacted, troops marching to tuck of drum, men cheering, women crying, and all with eyes turned on the common objective, Berlin.

Then our turn came. From the armoury down Grant Street to the Depot the old regiment marched. Major O'Shea was in command of the overseas contingent, an old campaigner and the most gallant

of officers. The Colonel rode beside him, doing his best to smile, but all too sad not to be going with us. For surely those who were left behind had the harder part. To us who were going away, there was promise of new scenes and new excitements, perhaps for some of us honour and glory; but for those we were leaving—what? With the band playing "The Girl I left Behind Me," we entrained.

And so Eastward. We had our last look for many days on the waters and the mountains of the West.

Outside on the platform the band played and handkerchiefs fluttered. We bade our last goodbyes, the train began to move; we were off. Eastward through the snows, the pine forests, and passes of the mountains. Eastward across the rolling miles of golden prairie, and along the north shore of mighty Lake Superior. Our faces set to the rising sun, with "Berlin or bust!" as our motto, freighted with a little bad, but much good, we passed on our way.

Major O'Shea was in command of the train, and in addition to the old regiment were drafts for the Engineers and Army Service Corps. We now began to see what manner of man our O.C. was. Everything was in order; daily the whole train was inspected, and the men were instructed from the start in arranging their kits and keeping their

quarters clean. Once a day the troop train halted at some town by the way, and for an hour we route-marched.

Never were such well-behaved troops. Trouble ? —there was none.

" What sort of imitation saints are these we've got on board the train ?" demanded the Adjutant, in a speculative mood, at one of the stops by the wayside in the mountains. " No drunks, nothing ! Never saw such queer soldiers."

" They're not in it with the old Clyde Militia. Why, we used to have to turn the fire-hose on to them, to sober them up !" said Mackintosh, our redoubtable Quartermaster.

Our wonderful record was broken, however, when we arrived at Cariboo Cut. I regret that there was one who strayed from the path of total abstinence. He was undoubtedly Scotch—at least, judging by his accent and the smell of his breath. He had got beyond the hiccoughing stage; so, as the train gradually pulled out, he was quietly dropped off the back step of the last car. That was enough; no better punishment could have been devised. Pack-drill, fining, anything would have passed unnoticed, but nobody wanted to be left behind. " Berlin or bust !"

Corporal McQueen, who, for all his twenty-seven bodily deficiencies, had succeeded in convincing everybody as to his indispensability to the success

of the transcontinental trip, was very much to the fore. At every stopping-place he was the first on the platform, and could be seen gravely marching up and down, with some small child, preferably a girl, in his arms. His small charge he fed with candies, while he flattered the mothers in a manner entirely his own, and had a ready answer for any flippant remark from the bystanders.

At every station, when the train halted, the citizens came to cheer us on our way. The girls gave us fruit and candies, and here we were besieged with gossip. Ten thousand Australians were coming across the continent immediately behind us. The Indian army was also going to Europe that way. We heard of great British victories, the Germans hurled back on their own frontiers, the French in close pursuit.

We now began to talk of the Germans under new names; we called him the gentle Hun, and referred to him familiarly as our friend the Bosche. In fact, we were rapidly acquiring the air of war-worn veterans.

In the cars it was very much as any other transcontinental journey. We fed very frequently and very well; we played poker when time permitted; but for the most part we were busy getting to know our men and brother officers.

After some pleasant easy days we were decanted out on a railroad siding, at the mercy of a French Canadian officer in rubber boots. We were told

that we had arrived at Valcartier. We got an impression of fir-trees and heather, and a grey dawn struggling through a clinging mist. We fell out of the train and fell into rank, in a state of sodden depression, and here we waited for news and orders.

CHAPTER II

FROM WEST TO EAST

In the early morning we entered the city of tents, for surely it was right to call it a city? Even in Canada, the country of mushroom growths, this must have constituted a record, for in less than two weeks the ground had been cleared and the timber felled to make room for a camp of nearly 50,000 men. It was at once manifest that someone with an imagination had been at work. Rows and rows of tents stretched on all sides, and disappeared finally into the distance, horse-lines hung on the flanks, and marquees were everywhere. As we marched down over the hill the sun behind us was just rising, driving the mist before it, and shining on the white-peaked tents. Bugles were sounding *réveillé;* in the Highlanders' lines the pipes were playing, and the whole camp was beginning to hum into activity and life. The Union Flag near a large house on a bluff showed where headquarters were.

Private Macmickle was so overcome by the spectacle that he promptly threw a fit, and the Doctor, as the cry of "Stretcher-bearers!" went

up, could be heard muttering all manner of profanities at the wretched wight, who had dared to come up for medical examination although possessing such abnormal tendencies.

Thus we entered on the next phase. This was a time of doubt and uncertainty—doubt because the war might be over before we arrived in Europe, and uncertainty because we might not be the ones selected to go. During these days the transport officer, Lieutenant Cousins, who shared a tent with the Quartermaster, could be heard lamenting every German failure and bemoaning any British success, so frightened was he that he would arrive too late!

We found that it was intended to send a division to Europe. Many of us were not exactly certain what a division really meant, and at least were by no means familiar with all the intricacies of ammunition columns, divisional trains, first-line transport, and army veterinary corps. Some of us had not even heard that such things existed.

As a division was leaving it was only natural that a Western Brigade would be formed, and with the conception came the consummation. The regiments composing this brigade were named after the four western provinces. We in our unit were now busy trying to forget whether we were "Rifles" or "Irish" or "Rangers" or "Fusiliers"! The last unit to join us came from the mountains. They marched into camp in pith-helmets, and looking as if they had marched across

the Sahara Desert. Talk about English! they might have been enlisted in Oxfordshire. The Quartermaster and the Doctor, our two Scotsmen, had one look at them and went over to discuss the question with the Jocks. It was almost more than they could bear. Ex-imperial officers swarmed in their ranks, D.S.O.'s were rife among them, and they wore medals from many previous campaigns.

Gradually we began to settle down as a battalion. The English are always hard to assimilate, as they have a tendency to cling to everything except the present, and to praise up everything except their immediate surroundings! Nobody paid much attention to the grumbling however, and certainly nobody troubled. Colonel O'Shea was in command of the battalion, and we were no mean part of a unit which later was to make history in its own little way—the Western Brigade. The Brigadier came from the West, and gradually we began to lean on him as on the anchor-man in a tug-of-war team; and as we slowly took the strain, we felt we had him behind us, always ready, always willing, to help us in every way to support the heat and burden of the day.

In the Pompadours we were a mixed community. The Colonel and the Major were Canadian veterans from Paardeberg. Few of our senior officers but had seen service in some distant clime and country. The medals we carried embraced everything from the Louis Reil Rebellion to the last Boxer rising.

And it was not only in war that the officers had gleaned their experience, for most of them had also in the sterner times of peace followed many trades throughout the world. Few were the occupations they had not adorned by their presence, from selling life assurances to washing gold in the beds of our northern rivers! Some had tended bar, or cooked on the C.P.R.; others came from the Mounted Police or from fruit farms on the lakes.

With the men it was in no wise different. Our greatest scamp had a University degree, the face of an Adonis, and parted his curling locks in the centre. The leading exponent of the ancient game of crown and anchor had the refined appearance and austere demeanour of Procurator in the Holy Synod. Our strongest man was a one-eyed Russian, the most cheerful a Greek. The Padre's batman was a professional boxer, the post-corporal an actor. In minor items of equipment, such as fingers, toes, and ears, we were at times extraordinarily deficient; our best shot was the sergeant cook, and our premier bayonet-fighter in private life was a bird fancier. Any slight omissions in appendages and extremities from frost-bite or careless use of an axe did not in the least detract from our efficiency as a whole. I have heard us accused of being rough, so much so that when we first went to Belgium evil-minded people said, "What has the poor stricken country done to deserve this?" In any case we were certainly

tough, and after all we were the first, and therefore the more willing.

First thing the Canadians had to learn was to shoot, and in the clear mountain air it was easy. In a few days a gigantic mammoth of a digger had scooped a trench several miles in extent, and with this to protect the markers while observing the targets, the largest rifle-range in the world had sprung into existence. I say this without fear of contradiction. I was once told how many more targets there were there than at Bisley, but I forget now. Somebody had been at work, someone with a big mind and the faculty of getting things done. Here whole regiments could shoot at one time, and all day the crack of rifles could be heard as we learnt to use our weapons.

There were field-days over beyond the river, where we, now called the Pacific Pompadours, held a position against the rest of the Western Brigade, and fell back fighting to the last, with the expenditure of much blank ammunition and almost one casualty!

It was the Padre—brave and gallant warrior! He had heard that in falling back the regiment had left one of its number, suffering from a sprained ankle or some such malady, in the hands of the enemy. Mistrusting the attitude of the prairie farmers (who were attacking us) towards the Geneva Convention, the reverend gentleman determined on a rescue, or at least on rendering first

aid. Leaping lightly on his horse—the Padre has left his first youth behind him, but his soul is still young and he only turns the scale at two hundred—he galloped in pursuit, quite forgetting that the emblem of the defending force, a white band of a blameless clerical existence, was tied around his hat. The enemy naturally took him for a cavalry charge, a clerical counter-attack, and as he rode *ventre à terre* a withering fire was poured into him from the hedge lining the road. He lost his hat, he probably lost his stirrups, and certainly his horse bolted, but he kept his head and won through in the best spirit of the Church. Whether he found his man or not, I do not know, but he was busy, picking rifle-wads out of his ears and hair, for days afterwards.

The doctors had a great surprise in store for us. We were to be inoculated! We were all of us prepared for this, more or less. (This advisedly.) Our medicine-man had been gently sewing the seed among us for some time, assuring us it was nothing, and that the health of the army depended on it. There was, however, a cold calculating glint in his eye that belied the honeyed sweetness of his words. I must say the doctors had it down to a pretty fine point. We were led like sheep to the slaughter in droves. Special batches of ruthless medical men stood over us, and with arms bared and iodined, the cold steel was shoved into us. It was remarkable to notice how nervous

everyone was; men who afterwards faced every form of death from rifle bullet or shell quailed before this simple inoculation. Thus was the mystic rite performed, our own doctor standing by and gloating over our sufferings, and acting as a type of unbribable policeman to see that none escaped. Of course, we were very ill, some of us for quite six hours. Some of us had violent headaches, found afterwards, however, to be due to the spirits we had poured down to buck our spirits up.

Captain Smith was really quite ill. For two days he lay and tossed on the bed of sickness, groaning in agony; then, summoning up courage, he staggered to the mess. His gaunt frame and sunken cheeks were witness of the sufferings he had endured, while he described to a gaping crowd of listeners his harrowing experiences.

"Remarkable thing, how ill it makes you, painting a little yellow stuff on your arm with a brush," he concluded unctuously.

"But didn't they shove a needle into your arm?" questioned Lieutenant Bridges.

"Needle? No, certainly not. What would they do that for?"

"To give you the juice, of course. The dope's in a syringe like a six-inch hypodermic, and when they get your range they squirt it into your arm through a hollow needle."

"But, I assure you they did me differently:

they painted some brown stuff on to my skin, and then I was very sick," repeated the gallant warrior.

"Why, that's only iodine!" yelped Lieutenant Bridges, as the mess-tent rocked to the shouts of our merriment.

"Then I've not been inoculated at all! Waiter, whisky-and-soda! Damn! the camp's dry."

"Yes, that's what gives inoculation a bad name," muttered the Doctor as he left the tent in disgust.

Yes, the camp was dry—dry as the Sahara. The decree had gone forth that no hard drinks were to be bought, sold, or imbibed, within the camp limits. Had we been going to wage war in Canada, this might have been an excellent restriction. As it was, we had no crime, but we were going to Europe, the birthplace of Scotch whisky, English ale, French wines, and Belgian beer, and everyone was gradually saving up a glorious thirst.

We were gradually shaking down to military discipline, but the spirit of the West, with all its freedom and democracy, was still in our blood.

Private Ballsome, for instance, strolling into the orderly room requesting to see his commanding officer, gazed reprovingly at the Sergeant-Major when sternly commanded to come to attention, and extended a patronizing hand to Colonel O'Shea.

"Good-morning, Colonel. I wonder where it was we met before. Let me see, was it at the Cowboys' Club or at the Liberals' picnic last year at Skolitchan?"

Fortunately, through the Colonel's composition there ran a vein of humour, but the Sergeant-Major had to leave the tent for fear of exploding.

Private Ballsome was really hard to please. Captain Wales, sitting outside his tent enjoying a few moments' respite from bringing up his flock in the way it should go, suddenly became aware of his portly presence.

"What am I to do with this?" queried the mystified Ballsome, as he produced a web equipment for inspection.

"Wear it, of course," answered his O.C. company.

"But I can't, sir; it hurts me!" wailed the plethoric private.

Then there was Captain Bourdass. The only trouble about him was that they couldn't get a horse quite big enough for him. Finally the enterprising transport officer resurrected a Clydesdale elephant capable of supporting the Tower of Babel. Beside this a soap-box was placed and the Captain invited to ascend. But the soap-box collapsed like a ladies' band-box, and, as there was no hydraulic lift obtainable, the venture had to be given up.

Then there were reviews, which occurred with elaborate frequency, when we marched past with serried ranks and endeavoured, with praiseworthy enthusiasm, to keep in line and look to the right. We had sudden calls to gigantic meetings, when we were exhorted to take our hands out of our pockets! This became a sort of watchword, and so preyed on the mind of one Colonel that he walked about for several days with two sticks, in order that his hands could be kept occupied, and everyone thought that he had a sprained ankle at the very least.

And every now and then we were visited by the Duke,* and everyone felt the better for his coming. A real soldier, he appreciated our difficulties and was quick to notice the success of our efforts. Always quiet, courteous, and thoroughly human, his influence was felt from one end of our camp to the other.

There were pleasant times at the big camp. Days when we marched through the forests of maple and fir, or which we spent on the rifle-range. Nights when we sat round the camp-fire and sang our battalion songs. Would I could repeat them now! But all the time there was the doubt and uncertainty, the lingering thought that some might be taken and others left. We lay on our beds of fir branches, speculating on our chances; the super-

* H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught.

numerary officers wandered about morosely and furtively; and everyone longed for the day to come when for the time being we would see the last of Canada.

Then the news came we were to go as a division. The four brigades were to be shipped to Europe with all the supernumerary officers, and everyone sighed with relief. The transport was to march before us, and we were to see them no more. Ours would be under the hungry eye of the senior horse-thief, the transport officer. He had with some difficulty obtained the services of a transport sergeant, a robber second in degree only to himself. This worthy had been asked, when he applied for the post, if he knew anything about horses ?

" No; but I guess I can manage them. I once drove a steam shovel."

He was duly installed in his new position, when for several days he wandered round armed with an oil-can and a spanner ! Finally the one was kicked into the river by a recalcitrant mule, and the other lost.

We embarked on board the *Columbian*, and the next day proceeded out of dock and anchored upstream. Here we gazed on the famous battle-ground, the historic plains of Abraham, where our present allies had formerly been our enemies.

Now we had time to survey our quarters. Never

had troops been so luxuriously treated. Warrant officers and practically all the sergeants had state-rooms.

"I want my morning tea at seven, and please put a hot-water bottle in my bed, James," remarked one grizzled sergeant, addressing the state-room steward.

"What price trooping it through the Red Sea!" remarked Sergeant Johnstone. "We didn't have fancy bed-quilts and clean sheets!"

"Some war!" was the unanimous comment.

We floated down the broad bosom of the mighty river to Gospel Bay. Here were collected most of the convoy, for we were a late arrival. Now we commenced to be of good cheer, for we began to feel that we would not be sent back; we were really to get away. Thirty-one transports were assembled, laden with Canada's first contribution to the great European struggle.

In three long lines the convoy sailed across the Atlantic. Cruisers guarded us on either side, and kept a watchful eye in case of attack. But nobody troubled themselves much, for we all knew that the Navy was running the show, and that it would be all right.

We were busy. Physical jerks in the morning accelerated the liver and loosened one's joints. There were parades and lectures, boat-drill and inspections. Every man had a bunk; and the food

was excellent. The ban of the tented city was lifted. We had been a dry camp, but fortunately we were not a dry ship. We engaged in exciting contests on deck at shovel-board. It didn't matter who won, as both sides stood drinks. We watched the other ships in their long lines. We played at *Kriegspiel* in the evenings, and in the afternoon, the hour before dinner-time, we had lectures. Lieutenant Pillows on machine-guns—every one a world-beater. The portly Major Hill on scouting—one wondered how he would crawl through the grass himself in the way he so graphically described. Sundry medicine-men from the hospital, who shared the ship with us, on sanitation and sickness. Well, it was a pleasant hour of slumber, and if the lecturers did at times wake us up, you could hardly blame them !

For the rest the Adjutant and company officers spent hours a day trying to draft a nominal roll. The Adjutant was a worried and harassed man, and the roll was said to be purely nominal. The Doctor, in a den smelling evilly of carbolic and castor-oil, was visited by a monumental sick parade, anxious to escape from physical jerks. Fresh air and exercise on the top of half a pint of jalap appeared to be the universal prescription. Private Mavis, leaving the austere, unsympathetic presence, with an overload of castor-oil on board and a stern reminder not to come back again playing the old soldier, remarked to some of his

pals: "I know him; he's a horse doctor, not a hospital doctor. A blooming vet! He runs a livery barn at home."

On the whole, as with every voyage, we ate too much and slept too fully, and we were not sorry when we sighted the Millchase Light and knew we would shortly cast anchor in Westport.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD COUNTRY

We left Westport late at night, and after an uneventful train journey, arrived in the early morning at Barlington. From here the way led upwards by easy steps to the high ground, through villages with thatched roofs and white walls. The larks were singing and the sun shining, as we finished our march and arrived at what was to be our home, and the scene of our trials and labours for many a month.

Moorland West! To most of us the name is synonymous with mud and rain, with night-marching and trench-digging; but when first we saw it on that October morning the prospect was very pleasing. The low rolling down, and the patches of wood, some fir and some hard, was not unlike our own prairie. Most of us had not expected to see in all England such a stretch of open country. We camped on a slope. At the bottom, in a small fir-wood, was our transport. They had arrived at the same time as we did, after crossing the Atlantic in another boat. The transport officer, smelling of compressed fodder and

dubbin, was rushing around as fretful as a ferret. The horses had stood the sea voyage wonderfully, very much better than some of the men, but then they did not have leave in Westport like the humans!

Our messing was in the hands of different contractors. The one, at whose hands we suffered, probably thought we were a species of herbivorous animal that fed mainly on Brussels-sprouts. We received that harmless but unexciting vegetable, day in day out, until we began to feel that we were about to turn into some form of green cabbage ourselves. I shall never forget this species of frightfulness, and can only hope that the contractor spends the rest of eternity eating Brussels-sprouts. He gave us altogether a wrong impression of England. We got to believe that the English were inseparable from sprouts, that they were a national custom, and we were quite surprised when, later on, we went to other parts of the country to find that there are quite a variety of edible vegetables which the inhabitants are in the habit of eating.

After the Brussels-sprouts, the next article of consumption that attracted our notice was undoubtedly the beer. We had our regimental canteens, and they were a great success. In the mud and misery that we were to suffer in the days following, the canteens played a loyal part, and were responsible for very little crime. In any

case the beer was good, and when, for the first time, we buried our noses in the dark brown foaming depths of a yard-long tankard, we felt that the British nation was worth fighting for, if it was founded on such good material.

While on the subject of crime and matters of discipline generally, there was a certain misconception in the minds of many folk in the Old Country concerning the first Canadian division. A well-known paper printed what was considered an excellent joke, and one which amused us greatly and probably did a lot of good. I refer to the sentry incident:

Sentry. "Halt! Who goes there?"

Answer. "First Grenadiers."

Sentry. "Pass, first Grenadiers; all's well."

Sentry. "Halt! Who goes there?"

Answer. "What the Hell is that to you?"

Sentry. "Pass, Canadians; all's well."

Without entering into controversy on matters which I am, above all things, anxious to avoid, I humbly submit that this was no doubt a truthful description of an incident which possibly occurred once; but I do not think these incidents were frequent.

There was another matter. On leave one was perpetually having it said, what a fine body of men the Canadians were, but what a pity it was that they had such poor discipline. I think that the very people who said this frequently had very

little understanding of the persons they were criticizing. In the ranks of the first division were many men who not only had plenty of money at their command, but who had never in their lives been subjected to any form of discipline or restraint. The Canadian on leave, whether he was a full-private or a General, patronized the finest hotels and dined at the best restaurants. To our rank and file, it was incomprehensible that because he might be dressed as a private he should be excluded from various pleasures which he was in the habit of enjoying at home. In consequence of this our other ranks were much more in evidence than those of other units, and accordingly came in more for criticism. This choice of environment was perhaps not to be wondered at, when one considers that over a hundred commissions in Kitchener's Army were given to men in one regiment alone, within a few weeks of landing in England. Furthermore, we perhaps suffered from the reaction after the total abstinence of our camp in Canada. Again this is a matter that lies beyond the scope of my endeavours, and is therefore to be avoided.

The good people of England were also to a certain extent responsible. Their hospitality, which is proverbial, was in our case so lavish that it, in itself, was at times the cause of some of our lapses. On looking through the records of the first division, one must be struck by one fact, and that is, the

absence of all serious crime. Drunks there were, and glorious ones at that, but drunks there will always be as long as men are men and not tame guinea-pigs. "Overstaying pass" and "absence" also occurred with frequency, but this was due to the fleshpots of London. Insubordination and other more serious crimes were practically unknown.

We were faced with another difficulty. The plain near our camp was dotted with small woods. Coming as we did from a country, where the forests are so vast that years of lumbering have scarcely nibbled the outside margin, it was difficult to make the men understand how sacred a thing a tree is in England. The whole tactical situation of Salisbury Plain was in danger of being destroyed, and woods which had served the purpose of concealing attacking forces in many an historic sham-fight were on the point of complete disappearance. The Pompadours naturally supposed that when the firewood ration was short, the best thing was to go out and cut down the nearest stick of timber, by way of making up for the deficiency, for which they were in no way to blame.

As on the boat, we commenced the day with physical jerks. This brought us in contact with the dawn. Since the campaign commenced, we have become rather specialists in dawns. Now I can see beauty in a sunset, and have often watched the sun sinking in the west and the gradual changing

play of colours, the crimson and the gold. But I never could see anything attractive in the dawn. Yet during these last few months I have seen the sun rise on all sorts of occasions, and in all sorts of weathers, and always with a sinking at my heart, a breakfastless feeling in my interior, and the knowledge that I would be better in my bed. The man who once described the early morning as the best part of the day was either in his cups and on his way to bed, or ought to be certified as a lunatic. I have no sympathy with him.

The most unhappy man on these occasions was, undoubtedly, the Doctor, for half an hour before the physical jerks parade commenced, it was his duty to leave the Quartermaster snoring placidly in the tent, and braving the cold, the mud and misery, minister to the sick, the halt and the lame. These for the most part were those gentlemen who failed to understand that there was any benefit, moral or physical, to be gained by an early-morning indulgence in violent exercise, and sought exemption therefrom by the simulation of disease.

The Doctor was frequently not at his best at these early-morning séances. In fact, many of his extensive clientèle no doubt found him a trifle unapproachable and unsympathetic, but the morning parade did not suffer any diminution in numbers on account of the laxity of his vigilance.

The Quartermaster and the Doctor, as behoved two members of an alien race, shared a tent

together. Across the road behind them lay a battalion of Highlanders, and they would lie on their beds of an afternoon and listen to the pipes, and wonder how life could be possible in anything but a regiment of Jocks.

"Come in, Doctor, and lace the flaps tight; let's strafe these English," the Quartermaster would shout through the canvas. "Listen to that piping. I'll bet that piper comes from Argyllshire; I can tell that from his grace notes," as "Scotland the Brave" floated in on the evening breeze.

They were not the only aliens. There was a proud and haughty Welshman who mispronounced his nationality by terming himself a Kelt.

"You mean a Celt; you're not pretending you're a salmon," remonstrated the Quartermaster.

"Yes, it's bad form to spell it with a K," remarked the paymaster.

This furious Welshman was a real Sir Galahad. Thirsting with an eagerness to be out Hun-killing, he left the Pompadours, like so many others, to seek for pastures new in Kitchener's Army, and when the first Canadians had been for over a year in Flanders he was still wasting his sweetness upon the desert air of Salisbury! We who were fond of the Pompadours amused ourselves in our spare time in writing him sweet-scented epistles from Belgian farmhouses and French *estaminets*, asking him how he did, and if he intended spending the

rest of his life in England. "Daddy, what did you do in the big war ?"

We were much troubled by consequential individuals who went on leave to London and returned wrapt round with an atmosphere of importance and mystery. They would draw us secretively to one side, and with a grandiose air of solemnity, impart to us certain items of invaluable worth, which they guaranteed to come "straight from the War Office, old chap." They would tell us exactly when we were leaving for France, and whether we were to go as a division, or in separate brigades or battalions. It mattered not to them that their information varied from day to day, and that in every instance it proved to be inaccurate. With praiseworthy enthusiasm they kept us going with false rumours, until we sickened of them and finally paid them no attention.

These were not the only rumours that we were heartened up with. There were the Russians, those visionary warriors who came from Archangel and entrained at Aberdeen, where Strathithan whisky comes from, and hit the trail for the south. Of course this was no myth, for snow had been found in the railway carriages, and where could snow come from but from Russia ? This hallucination was just about as vivid and ridiculous as the Angels of Mons, and yet it found its believers. But we were getting used to rumours; in fact, during our military lifetime we had been brought up on

rumour, and loving the lying jade, had lingered in her presence. Japs, Hindoos, and Australians had, in our heated imagination, chased one another across the C.P.R. railroad tracks on their way to Europe. We heard that *somewhere* in the wilds of Salisbury Plains the great war was being run. That in a deserted farmhouse, or deep-dug cellar, the mighty chiefs who held the destinies of the Allies in their sway had their permanent habitation, and that there *somewhere*, almost in our midst, the glorious schemes were perfected which later were to culminate in the complete victory of our arms. Verily we must have appeared to be healthy infants to require so much sustenance and entertainment.

At first we may have believed these fairy-tales; perhaps they heartened us up, for I never yet heard a rumour that was not pleasant. But later we paid no attention to them, until finally the only persons to trouble about them were the Padres and the mechanical transport.

We had, however, other things to think of than rumours. The weather, which had at first welcomed us with balmy breezes and soft sunshine, now failed us, and with downpouring rain the scene completely changed. The main street of our camp became a running watercourse; the grass disappeared as if by magic, giving place to a chocolate-coloured coagulum which we learnt to know as mud. It entered into our lives; we splashed

around in it outside, we found it in our food; it clung to the outsides of our glasses when we went to have a drink; our bodies were plastered in it and our minds polluted by it; it became part of us, eating right into our souls.

Captain John Wallace, stuck in the mud with the wet slime almost oozing over his gumboot-tops, demanded of the landscape, as he struggled vainly to release himself, "What's the good of England, anyhow? Why don't we hand it over to the Germans?"

The mud was not allowed to interfere with our training; from early morning until sunset we were kept busy. Things we thought we knew, and had already practised to satiety in days past, had all to be gone over again. Gradually the metamorphosis was setting in; we neglected to smoke cigarettes on church parade. We learnt that in saluting our officers we were not losing all sense of self-respect. We even gave up chewing-gum when standing at attention.

I well remember an imperial officer when one of our sentries presented arms to him, at the same time sedulously chewing a wad of gum. "Has that man not finished his dinner yet?" he demanded of the sergeant of the guard.

"Yes; he's just having a chew!"

"A chew! Chewing what? Tobacco?"

"No, sir; gum."

"Gum!"

As the winter got worse the sick parade grew in proportion. Yet it hardly assumed the dimensions of that of another unit camped near to us. There, the indefatigable Medical Officer on one occasion started in at 7 a.m. There were four hundred and eighty on sick parade, and by five in the afternoon he was still going strong. At that hour he began sending out S.O.S. calls for medical assistance, and appealed to our own unfeeling quack, "You know, I don't think these men are all really sick; I'm almost certain some of them are pretending."

"Pretending nothing is an epidemic; you've struck—a plague."

"Really, but how alarming! Of what nature?"

"Good-nature on your part and damned laziness on theirs. I never permit the parade to be bigger than thirty; if there are any more, I go sick myself —that settles them."

Undoubtedly our medicine-man had no heart.

Our own little Hippocrates I found one day engaged in strafing the medical powers. He had reported a man as suffering from rheumatism, and had duly received a notice on A. F. B. X. Y. Z. that no such disease was known to the medical authorities. They were, however, wonderfully polite, and remitted him a list of diseases to choose from.

"What the Hades am I to do?" he murmured, reading through the menu. "Anthrax, bubonic

plague, smallpox, typhoid, heartburn—thank God for heartburn! Sergeant, enter up Private Griggs as suffering from 'heartburn,' and write a humble note to the mandarins apologizing for a wrong diagnosis. Though, how the Hellespont heartburn could give him pains in the knees and ankles, I'm hanged if I know!"

Then there was leave—our one respite from mud and continuous parades and night-marches. What we would have done without it, I don't know. Lieutenant Glendover took to his Welsh hills; the Doctor and the Quartermaster departed to places with unpronounceable names in the far north; Major Beverley made for the quiet domesticity of his native village in Devon; but for most of us there was one magnet, and one only—London.

London appeared very good to most of us, and its goodness was not only in the outer aspect. We put quite a lot of good Canadian money in circulation in the confines of the West End. From the Bank of Montreal to the Savoy Hotel everyone that we had ever known in Canada was certain to be met sometime or another.

Jeff McCree, late of Dawson City and presently platoon commander, was hugging the Frivolity bar as he ordered another round. His hat, to give more room for his head, was perched far back from his brow, when to him floated in an imperial unit in the shape of a very immature infant in a silk-hat, an eyeglass and a boiled shirt.

"Excuse me, sir, but at Oxford we wear our hats so." The infant was in his cups, but even so he would hardly, had he known Jeff's reputation as one of the hardest hitters in the Klondyke, have dared to alter the position of the hat. With the air of a connoisseur he slid Jeff's hat forward on his head. For my part, I stood aghast, and my heart was sore for the infant. I expected Jeff to make a meal of him at once, but instead he responded with good grace, thanked him for his tip, and inquired if the infant would have a drink.

"I don't mind if I do, some claret and lemonade, please."

"Claret nothing!" retorted Jeff. "You blow in here, teach me how to wear my hat, and order half a pint of Condy. I wear my hat as your Oxford crowd do; now you're in with this bunch, so it's up to you to stay with it. A rum-and-brandy please, miss, for this gentleman here with the glass eye."

The infant accepted the proposed drink. The situation may have appealed to him, yet I hardly think it likely. I imagine he began to have a glimmering that in his short and sheltered life he had never encountered quite these same people before. They paid scant attention to him, however, and spoke of strange things he had never heard of, in a language which at times he was not quite familiar with. He guessed that, having unwittingly stumbled into a camp of roughnecks, he had bitten off more than he could chew; but

being game, he tried to stay with the jackpot he had landed himself into.

"Have another snort?" said Lieutenant Madden of the Pompadours, as the infant put down his glass. He accepted, despite the fact that the first had made his hair curl, and almost cough the roof off his head.

The infant passed away peacefully a few minutes later, and we laid him to rest on a sofa against the wall. As we reverently closed his eyes and placed his silk-hat and nosegay on his youthful chest, Jeff remarked: "We don't mind learning from these people over here, and I reckon there's a lot they can teach us, but why don't they send us better instructors?"

"I guess he'll have some head when he returns to mother in the morning," said Lieutenant Madden.

> "Well, he died game, boys, let me tell;
> He had his boots on when he fell;
> So what the H——, Bill? What the H——?"

After all a tent is not such a bad thing to live in in winter, but we were not sorry when the time came for us to move into huts. One day we shook the mud of Moorland West off our feet and moved across the plain to Sparrow Crest. Here we were more comfortable, but the mud was not less omnipresent or sticky. We felt it was always a step nearer France, and were correspondingly elated. Here a new disappointment awaited us. Cerebro-

spinal meningitis made its appearance in the camp. First one and then another went down with it, but the epidemic never assumed dangerous proportions; two or three in a battalion was the highest figure, but we knew we were on the edge of a volcano, and that this might delay our departure.

If they ever present the Pompadours with colours, there are three things which ought to be recorded thereon among the battle honours: mud, cerebro-spinal, and a wreath of Brussels-sprouts. So far these have been the greatest of our trials in the present campaign!

At Sparrow Crest we lived in huts. The officers divided into right and left half battalions. The right half, under Major Meldrum, made a great parade of righteousness, especially in the mornings. They sprang from their couches with extraordinary verve and abandon, and generally had their breakfasts finished while the left half was still rubbing the sleep out of their eyes. Major Meldrum was the restless, driving spirit that propelled them from their blankets—he and the Padre, who was always a perfect nuisance in the morning. They must both have possessed uneasy consciences.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Well, the Major wore his on his shoulders, and the Padre, no doubt, was hoping to wear one later on in the sweet by-and-by. It was martial law with a vengeance; complaint and grumbling were alike useless. Once the Major's hawk-like

face appeared round the corner of the cubicle, it was as well to yield to the inevitable.

Not so in the left half. Tiny Pillows, our machine-gunner, who turned the scale at two hundred and forty, was always the first up. He would sit for half an hour on the side of his bed, wondering whether he should get back between the blankets and mumbling about "world-beaters." Whether he was thinking of his guns or some new white hopes, we never knew. Lieutenant Bromfield and the T.O.* were always early astir, but they were both so thin that their beds hurt their bones. The rest of us lay peacefully snoring, until an outburst of profanity betrayed the fact that the Medical Officer was out and making a hasty toilet prior to browbeating his malingerers at morning sick parade. He generally pulled the Adjutant out of bed before leaving, when a free fight would ensue across the bed of the Quartermaster, who, like the dormouse in "Alice in Wonderland," slept through it all. Then the Medical Officer would retire to meet his babes, attired in a pair of gumboots and a cavalry great-coat. What he wore underneath we never quite fathomed. I imagine it was not much, and probably insufficient to bear the scrutiny of a kit inspection. The Quartermaster was always the last man up. He arrived so late that on one occasion the Commanding Officer was feign to ask him

* Transport Officer.

if he wasn't developing bedsores by being so long in bed ?

At Sparrow Crest the training proceeded uninterruptedly, except for cerebro-spinal fever. And as hut after hut was quarantined our spirits sank, and we saw before us months of isolation. But fortunately the evil lifted, and finally there were no new cases, and we breathed again.

We tilted with bayonets at imaginary Bosches in the shape of sacks of straw. We had our various musketry courses, and we marched with full equipment; we dug trenches at night, which were sighted by the simple process of sending an officer forward for two hundred yards with a flashlight. The gentle irony of the situation we did not then appreciate, but I have often wondered since how long that officer would last during the real thing.

The left battalion had gone out in the afternoon to dig themselves in in the dark, and at midnight the right half were to attack.

There was still an hour of light remaining, so the officers of the left half, under the shelter of a spinny, employed it to cook themselves a meal of flapjacks and ham and eggs. Captain Wales conducted operations. Lieutenant Allonby, his palate tickled by the delicacy of the repast, became inquisitive.

" Where did you learn to cook, old thing ?"

" On the C.P.R., on a dining-car; there were three of us, all ex-imperial officers. There was Simons, who used to be in the 12th Hussars; he's

now a Brigade Major in K.'s. And Bruce, who went back to the Scottish Rangers."

"What; did you know Simons? Why, he and I were time-keeping in a construction camp on the Grand Trunk in 1910," said Madden. "He'd a great way with the Austrians; wonderfully persuasive with price of lead-piping."

"I knew Bruce, too; he used to be up at Kelowna. Supposed to have a ranch, but he'd got the whole thing mortgaged higher than a kite," remarked Bridges.

"Yes, and when his uncle came out to look the place over we stocked it for him. I lent him a cow, and Lindsay sent over some hens. The old man was quite pleased, and went away thinking that Brucy had become a reformed character," said Hume, with his mouth full of flapjacks.

"I don't know what we're going to do when this cruel war is over. I'm going to go bust so high the pieces will never come down. I suppose I'll have to dig in a drain, or some such back-breaking healthy form of sport," said John Wallace.

"What about West Point lots?"

"All right in time, my boy; but just for the present the public are a bit shy," answered the honest one.

"I'm afraid there won't be another coal-strike to keep you going, Madden."

"Strike be hanged! I'm going back as assistant purser on the Vancouver Hong-Kong run."

"Oh, that's a rotten run; it's as bad as the North Atlantic. I'm for Sydney, New South Wales. Mixed bathing at Manley Beach is good enough for me," said Hume.

"Where's Monty? Monty, you old stiff! Hume says Manley Beach is all right. What do you know about it?"

"Oh, pretty fair," assented Lieutenant Montgomery. "He doesn't know any better. I remember once meeting a lady in George Street, Sydney."

"Fall in, left half battalion!" shouted Major Hill, adding quietly: "When Monty starts his Australian reminiscences it's time for honest men to get to business."

We dug ourselves in, through the chalk, and manned our trenches as midnight approached.

The right half, commanded by Major Meldrum, a bloodthirsty Irishman with a fine eye for country, had left camp some hours behind us, and after a night-march of some ten miles proceeded gradually to develop an attack against us.

Captain Younger fell in with our first-line scouts, who were some three hundred yards in advance of the left half, and mistook their withering fire for that of the main body. With undying heroism he led a bayonet charge over a quarter of a mile of broken ground, and fell nearly dying of exhaustion when he rushed the trench. He was the first man home, and although his time was over fifty-two

seconds, we considered it a very fair achievement, considering the badness of the country and the weight of his pack.

"Are you entering for the quarter-mile at the battalion sports?" the Medical Officer inquired gently as he revived him with medical comforts in the support trench. As most of Younger's company failed to arrive at all, we crossed them off as casualties, due to the accuracy of our rifle fire. Captain Cope executed an inspiring enveloping movement, and succeeded in enveloping himself to such an extent that, after waiting for him and his merry men for over an hour, we decided to put them down as "officially reported missing, believed to be lost." We found them two miles along the road on the way home, trying to find their way by the stars, an unprofitable occupation, as the whole sky was obscured by clouds. Cope's crowd, however, took it out of us on the road home. They had done no digging, neither had they charged across the open; so while we were somewhat tired, they were still fresh. Further, they marched at the head of the battalion.

It was a very disgusted crowd of officers who assembled in the mess at 4 a.m. for nightcaps. Even the left half, who felt that the merit they had achieved in the early part of the evening scarcely warranted being marched off their legs by Captain Cope's warriors later on, were in a state of dignified dudgeon.

"What did you think you were doing, Cope—running a Marathon?" came the obvious question from Captain Younger.

"I suppose you were in a hurry, in case you got lost again," said Major Hill.

"No; I merely wanted to see if you dead-beats knew how to march. You'll never be able to afford to ride, so the sooner you learn the better."

And so to bed.

All the time was not taken up by training; we had our lighter moments also. In the mess in the evening Lieutenants Madden, Montgomery, and Lindsay used to put on stunts for our entertainment. We had Zeppelin raids, when the airship, consisting of two chairs and a section of table, floated round the anteroom. The intrepid aviators, hovering on their giddy perch, dropped bombs, consisting of empty beer-bottles, on the heads of notabilities thousands of feet beneath them. Or it was a shipwreck, when the sun-grilled mariners navigated the vast unending waters of the mess-room floor on an upturned table, searching for a sail through a telescopic whisky-bottle, and clamoured vainly for drinks. There the ancient mariner shot the albatross which flapped down from the top of the piano. We tied it to his neck, and ate it finally at mess on the morrow under the heading of pheasant!

There were sordid dramas from real life, when little Alice, dressed in a table-cloth and her mother

in curl-papers, waited for the drunken father outside the gin-palace door. Then there was the poisoning act, when the foully wronged heroine, Lieutenant Lindsay, caught the villain, Lieutenant Montgomery, in the act of inserting No. 9 pills in her whisky-and-soda; and rushing to the windows, discovered the lights of her lover's (Lieutenant Madden's) motor-car coming up the drive. The car was a soap-box and the lights one candle. It acted quite well, as the lamps in the anteroom were all turned out to make this seem more realistic.

Then there were other nights when we went over to the Jocks on the top of the hill, and danced reels to the music of the pipes; or the Saskatoons gave a dance, and we did the light fantastic until an early hour in the morning, and rolled on to parade without troubling our beds at all.

Then we were reviewed. We had been reviewed on so many occasions that we were really becoming dizzy with the process. The Duke of Connaught reviewed us in the early days of our career; Earl Roberts did the same by us at Moorland West; the King had reviewed us once before, and was to do so again.

The Division looked well, and undoubtedly did well, as we marched past in front of His Majesty. We were equipped down to the last detail, and showed that despite the wind and weather we had profited by the weary months of waiting on the

dreary plain. Horse, artillery, and foot marched in front of His Majesty, rank on rank in khaki. There are worse things than the war, and many of us thought so that day as we passed by the saluting base, the Royal Standard flying overhead and the trim khaki figure taking the salute from the moving thousands of the 1st Canadian Division.

Our time in England was rapidly coming to a close. Everything pointed to an early departure. Lecturers came and spouted at us, telling us of the trenches. Worthy men, they no doubt knew their business, but they left us somewhat mystified, and with an impression of shot and shell, loud explosions, and sudden death. However, we hoped soon to see for ourselves; and if our intelligence failed to grasp the details, our imagination stood us in good stead and filled in the defects.

Meantime we were preparing. Our kits needed a lot of consideration. Thirty-five pounds per officer, including bedding, is hardly sufficient to go honeymooning on, and our effects needed a lot of whittling down. Some of the officers were glorious sights, hung round with automatic pistols, binoculars, water-bottles, periscopes, wire-cutters, electric torches, haversacks, amputating knives, can-openers, corkscrews, oyster knives, range-finders, cameras, compasses, flasks, marlingspikes, and other fancy trinkets! The old campaigners had little or no kit. What there was, was done up

in a couple of sandbags, and consisted mainly of two blankets and a waterproof sheet.

Every item was gradually weighed in the balance, and as the time grew shorter the amount of baggage found wanting gradually increased. One trinket after another was discarded, and we gradually began to look less like Christmas-trees. We cast envious eyes on the medicine-man, for he had a whole Maltese cart to himself, and evidently meant to keep it so. He was for ever quoting the Geneva Convention business to sundry mess presidents, and others who desired to smuggle in contraband under the shelter of the Red Cross.

To one and all he turned a deaf ear, even to the Bishop, whose ideas of campaigning seemed to run to feather-beds, bedsocks, and family Bibles. The worthy man had collected together enough hospital comforts to start a ladies' seminary; and despite the unapproachable and almost antagonistic attitude of the Medical Officer, succeeded in carrying most of his effects with him to France. Later on our wounded had frequent cause to bless our man of God, whose activities took such a practical course in alleviating their sufferings and ministering to their wants.

Then the last day came. We wandered about as disconsolate as cats at a family flitting. The mess had ceased to exist, our huts were gutted; but we were glad—glad to be going. The uncertainty of the future was everything; the certainty of the

past few months had been too terrible. The mud of Flanders could not be worse than the mud of Salisbury; the sudden death by bullets was not to be compared with the silent, insidious onslaught of cerebro-spinal; and there would be no Brussels-sprouts. I presume the authorities had some object in view when they moved us in the darkness: concealing the movements of troops, most likely.

We had something to eat—not that I remember what it was—in the undecorated mess-room, and quietly assumed our equipment. We gazed for the last time on the bare interior of the hut that had been our dormitory for so many months, seeing if anything had been left behind, then ploughed our way silently and thoughtfully through the mud to the parade ground.

We were off. Behind us lay the silent huts and all the dull routine of our novitiate. In front lay the unknown, with all its hopes and fears, its dangers, pleasures, and perhaps its glory. At the corner we ran into the transport of the Assiniboias; they were early in difficulties with a trace broken and a limber sunk axle-deep in the mire. "Bill Minor," our transport officer, knew one better than this; in the afternoon he had nosed out a track over which our limbers travelled without mishap. We entrained quickly, and the train started almost immediately. At Bridgeport we surprised the embarkation officer with the rapidity

with which we got on board. He told us that for days he had been dreading our arrival; he had been informed it would take ages to embark the Canadians, yet our Brigade defeated his best record by quite an appreciable amount. He really thought we had been maligned.

Horses, waggons, stores, everything slid on board with precision and exactitude, as though we had rehearsed the movement for years.

Of the voyage across there is little to narrate. The Captain and officers of the S.S. *Cambridgeshire* did all they could for us, and there was a trump-card in the shape of a head steward who ministered to our wants unmindful of the Licensing Bill. The weather was all that we could wish for, and the hostile submarines, if there were any, reposed sulkily on the bottom. We had none of the luxury that characterized our passage across the Atlantic; yet this, in itself, was merely a sign that we were gradually getting down to things. Both officers and men slept on the bare boards, yet we slept sound and dreamed not at all.

Private Gallagher provided the only piece of excitement. Selecting a convenient hatchway, he contrived to fall through it into the black depths of the hold. He ought to have broken his neck, but, instead, sustained a compound fracture of his thigh-bone. The Medical Officer nearly hanged himself with a rope in going to his assistance, and the hero of the adventure was certainly the first

officer. I had often heard of the adaptability and ingenuity of the mercantile marine, and certainly it was more than demonstrated on this occasion. The care with which this indefatigable sailor rigged up a stretcher on a crane and hoisted the injured private from the bowels of the ship was worth going a long way to watch.

CHAPTER IV

LA BELLE FRANCE

We arrived at Pierreville in the afternoon, but it was dark before we were permitted to land. The authorities improved the shining hour by issuing to us Teddy-bear coats, mittens, and sundry woollies. This resulted in our resembling closely a Polar Expedition, without the icicles, but it was cold enough, in any case, without them.

Fatigue parties were told off, under the watchful eye of Major Hill, to help with the unloading, while the rest of us sat around in our hairy coats and admired one another. We marched from the wharf in the darkness, Private Skinner falling into the dock in his anxiety not to be left behind. We pulled him out on the end of a rope, and managed, amid the multifarious garments provided by a generous and all-seeing Government, to find him a change.

Of Pierreville we saw little. A French sentry or two, a dark street, a bridge across a canal, the back view of a brewery, and we were at the railway station. A Canadian infantry battalion must bulk more largely on the landscape than its British or

French equivalent. With the best will in the world, it took us all we knew to get crammed into the very limited accommodation provided for us. "Hommes 40" may have been all very well in the Stone Age, when the freight-cars in question were undoubtedly constructed, judging by their dilapidated prehistoric appearance, but they were certainly not designed for lusty, overfed Canadian foot-soldiers. They were geniune antiques, however, and within their narrow confines the Pompadours, in every imaginable position of cramped restraint, journeyed to the war.

The officers were provided with carriages as cramped as were the men's. The smart and eager ones having rammed their platoons safely into the rabbit-hutches at the back, promptly pinched these, and spreading themselves out, glared at all would-be intruders.

"Where the Hellifer are you going to swing your hammock, Doc. ?" said the Quartermaster, as he and the Medical Officer discovered the state of affairs.

"Anywhere but with these English robbers; they've conquered most of the world, and yet they're not satisfied, but must needs go out of their way to steal all the best seats," enjoined the infuriated vendor of pills.

"Hullo, Maxims, are you looking for a home too ?" The Mackintosh had just found Tiny Pillows wandering around disconsolate, with two

yards of bread under one arm, and two useful bottles under the other.

"You ought to be popular wherever you go, with all that dope; did those carriage thieves in front refuse you admittance?" asked Lieutenant Hume.

"Not on your life; they wanted to adopt me, but I'm not travelling with that crowd—they're too thirsty."

"You come with us and join the total abstinence brigade, an offshoot from our old moral reform club. Mac here is the president," advised the M.O. "Where's Whistling Willie?"

"Throwing a cat fit over some of his horses; he can't get them shoved into the space he's got. They're not like men; they've got minds of their own," said The Mackintosh.

"I saw one of Cousins' mules, trying to kick him in the wind just now. Luckily, he's built at an angle, and the ungrateful animal scored a miss," remarked Major Rawlins.

"That's the worst of commanding a ruddy detail. You either get forgotten altogether by the silly old Adjutant, or come up last and find someone has swiped all the accommodation," grumbled the Doctor.

"Yes; the next war I come to, I'm going to be a parson or paymaster. I'll bet they've pinched the two seats next the Colonel," said the Quartermaster.

" Major, you've got plenty of medals—you look like a soldier; go and frighten that rabbit-faced citizen over there with the tin horn, and arrange a coupé for me and ' Pills,' " suggested Pillows.

" Yes; and you'll find us in the pub over there —the ' Bleu Vache '; when you've put the deal through, we'll probably be drinking milk," remarked the Doctor.

Major Rawlins didn't belie his reputation as a rustler, with the result that very shortly the discomfited extras found accommodation in an empty freight-car. This with a liberal sprinkling of straw formed such a comfortable domicile, that the eager ones in the carriages next door began to regret their choice of quarters. They made a descent on the freight-car, but were ingloriously repulsed by its occupants, who now found that they had not only space for themselves, but also ample room to spread out their blankets.

The citizen with the tin horn now got busy, and with much creaking, groaning, and jolting, the train got into motion. The Medical Officer and Tiny Pillows narrowly escaped being left behind in the " Blue Cow," but were saved at the last moment by Lieutenant Ball, who in his woolly coat looked more like a puff-ball than ever.

We journeyed slowly through the smiling land of France, stopping at frequent intervals, when we obtained hot water with which to wet our tea. We had ample opportunity at the various towns

we stopped at to buy food to supplement our rations. The country people came out and cheered us on our way. On the platforms of the stations we fraternized with the French soldiers and the local inhabitants.

Lieutenant Cousins enhanced his reputation by pulling off a regular scoop. Had he been still on the staff of the *Daily Hustler*, he would have attained instant celebrity. One of his pets fell off the train. Please don't ask me how it happened; I wasn't present when the episode commenced. How does a horse usually fall out of a waggon? He may have been of the serpentine class and wriggled through the window; he may have been heavy draft and fallen through the floor; he may even have politely walked through the open door.

In any case, as we pulled out of a wayside station, there was our little cousin passing from one paroxysm of acute mania into another in the middle of the track, and pulling at the head-rope of the enterprising charger, which three of his assistants, with bent backs and much vituperation, were shoving from behind. As we rounded the curve, the last thing we saw was the transport officer semaphoring wildly, the horse at a standstill, and three lusty privates wiping the sweat out of their eyes and blowing kisses at our tail light.

In the sanctity of our freight-car we made the acquaintance of the French bread, and the wine

both red and white. We hung our legs outside and watched the pleasant country as we rumbled on our way. Flat for the most part, and very tidy. Small fields well fenced; country roads running between trim fences; shock-headed willows with stunted bodies; tall, graceful poplars, and the villages sweetly quiet with their red-roofed houses, with white walls and green shutters, clustering round the old grey churches, which were old and grey when the land we came from was not even marked on the map. It is indeed a good land, and a land worth fighting for, and we quite understood how it was that people called it La Belle France; and how, with this to fight for, the French soldiers have borne so well the heat and the turmoil of the day. And the good folk cheered us on our way, bidding us "Bon voyage!" and "Bon chance!" and, above all things, to drive back the Germans from their fair country.

At night we trundled on through sleeping towns and villages, clattered over bridges, and roared through tunnels; it snowed, and under the bright moon all the land was white. And among the stars there was one that hung in the south, and Lieutenant Hume, who knew nothing of astronomy, called it Venus, and said it was his star.

"Rot!" said the Doctor, whose feet were getting frozen with the draught which came from the open door where the sentimental Lieutenant sat, and who was correspondingly evil-tempered. "If it's

Venus, I bet Montgomery has an option on it. Stop your infernal star-gazing and shut the door."

"I feel," grunted the Quartermaster in his slumbers, "like a frozen sockeye; hurry up, someone, and put me in a can."

We arrived at Maurice, and shook the sleep out of our joints and picked the straw out of our hair. Of course, it was about 4 a.m.—it always is in this campaign—and of course everyone felt like the devil, and showed it in consequence. Naturally it was correspondingly dark, and everyone fell over everyone else, and the transport fell on the top of everything.

In the dawn we marched out of the station yard silently, as if we were ashamed of ourselves, and on to the high-road, and so to seek our billets.

Maurice was our first look of Flanders. We saw a succession of ridiculous windmills twirling their sails in the breeze, and as we marched through the small village, we looked at it with some interest. Everything was there to which we later became so familiar. The *pavé* road, which twisted ankles not yet attuned to its contours; the rows of houses, flush with the main street; their gardens, if existent, carefully secreted in the background. Here were *estaminets* on which ran sundry legends: "Salt's Beer c'est le meilleur," and which catered for a variety of tastes—French, British, and Belgique. Here was the red-brick church with its decapitated

tower and the graveyard of clustering monuments. I wouldn't like to be buried there; they seem to lie too thick. Whenever I see the throng of head-sticks, for they are not made of good sandstone or granite which endure, but resemble more closely a series of notices to keep off the turf, I always imagine the feverish, anxious rush that will take place when the final bugle blows. "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo;" give me a grave on our western island, where I can smell the breeze of the Pacific, and hear the surf beating on the shore; or a seven-foot lot in the mountains, with the black pines watching overhead and nodding in the wind blowing cold from off the snow. There I'll hear the bugle just as clear, and be able to be early on parade without being jostled, bumped, and hustled as I fall in.

We found our billets and started to grumble. This was our first experience; later on, we got regularly into the way of it. The Brigade strafed us for our shortcomings and goings, and we, who could not strafe back, on account of discipline's force of gravity, resorted to grumbling.

New billets always gave us a fitting opportunity; the best staff under the most perfect of conditions would not have pleased us! There was always plenty of opportunity to find something wrong, and you may be sure we found it. The companies were either too close, or too scattered. The Quartermaster's store was too near, or too

far away. The machine-guns were not with Headquarters, or ought to have been with the transport!

"Just like my ruddy luck," grumbled Lieutenant Madden; "they've put me in a billet with an old woman with sixteen kids, and Smith has got a peach of a girl in his bungalow."

"Yes, he's already arranged to have French lessons from her," said Montgomery. "Why do I never have any luck? The old woman in my shack has got a face like a door-knocker."

Captain Ainslie of the Brigade Staff understood us to the finest point; he knew at a glance when somebody's breakfast lay in a weighty lump against a rebellious liver, and made his visits correspondingly short.

"All right, old man; I'll tell them at Brigade Headquarters. We'll arrange it," and was off, and within an hour, when the liver had thought better of it and got to work, the grumbler had forgotten all about his trouble, so, apparently, had the gallant Captain, as no message came from Brigade Headquarters. One of the best was Bob Ainslie; in the old days, when the rush was on, he was one of the few who made the Edmonton trail to Dawson City, and the last five hundred miles on his own!

The Pompadours were scattered round in various farm-houses, some farther, some nearer to Battalion Headquarters, but none more distant than a mile. They lay amid hop-fields, whose naked poles, standing black against the winter sky and fields,

looked black and bare, waiting for the touch of spring.

The Germans had been here, and we got our first news of them from people who had actually seen them. It wasn't very good news, for that matter. They had shot the parish priest against the wall of his church, and one young boy of fourteen under whose bed an old and rusty revolver had been found; that was not all, but as this is not an account of atrocities, let it suffice. It served to increase our anxiety to be up and doing. The war was getting nearer. In the evening we walked out on the road and saw the distant lights, the flash of guns, and we heard them too, faintly booming in the east.

The days at sea and the train journey had not improved our condition, so we resumed the practice which we hoped we had left behind us at Salisbury Plain, and marched along the country roads.

At Maurice we made the acquaintance of many strange phenomena, and Major Hill, meeting for the first time the Flemish national monument to thrift and fertility, which stands in the centre of the courtyard of every farm-house, sent instantly to the Medical Officer and demanded that he remove it at once. So the Medical Officer gazed at the manure pile, and in order that the sequence of authority might not be impaired, sent for the sanitary sergeant and gave the necessary orders.

So the sanitary sergeant went to Major Hill and asked for a fatigue party to reinforce the two sanitary policemen, who belonged to that company, and who were unable alone to cope with the nuisance, and mentioned that the Medical Officer thought that the whole company would be required for the undertaking. Then Major Hill exploded, which is a habit indulged in by those of that exalted rank, in common with the Mill's hand-grenade and other forms of awfulness, and was rude enough to say that he would see the Medical Officer damned first. So the pile remained, and other subsequent piles, and, in the end, even Major Hill appeared to get used to them, and regarded them as features of the landscape, the same as windmills, *estaminets*, and churches.

Then we were inspected by the Commander-in-Chief, a great man who said little, but seemed to notice everything. We were on our best behaviour, almost as good as when His Majesty the King visited us, and the men in the rear rank forgot to chew gum; they had long ago got out of the habit of smoking cigarettes on parade. Colonel O'Shea called us to attention, and we presented arms and stood very steady—nearly as steady as Regulars, I imagine. Of course, if you are only a militia-man you can't be quite steady when a real live Field-Marshal, with three rows of medal ribbons, is passing just under your nose; you're bound to let your eyes move, at any rate. It's only natural;

you want to size up the man who is running the show, and see what sort of a man he is.

He seemed to be satisfied—quite pleased, in fact; and after the Commander-in-Chief and his following had departed, the Colonel told us we were to go to the trenches and learn from the Imperial troops there, all that they could teach us for a week, and then we would come back to Maurice for more training. So that night we went to sleep happy, and dreamed of Pompadours charging wildly with the bayonet, with Colonel O'Shea on the big chestnut with white points at their head, through battalions, brigades, divisions, and army corps of Germans, right through the Brandenburger Gate, and into Unter den Linden, to the very gates of the palace with its copper dome.

CHAPTER V

OLD TIMERS AND TENDERFEET

We left Maurice at a comparatively respectable hour. That is to say, we weren't pulled out of bed in the middle of the night; we even got time for a good breakfast—an extraordinary act of forbearance on the part of the authorities! The mechanical transport came to our assistance, and carried a blanket for each of the men, but all the same we had far too much to carry, as we found out later. A blanket, a waterproof sheet, a Teddy-bear coat, a greatcoat, in addition to the ordinary equipment, and a hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition, may be all right for a mule, but certainly not for a man. Later on we learnt to travel more lightly, but for the moment we were bowed down by the abundance of our possessions and the bounty of a beneficent Government. As we progressed, the sun became quite hot, and the men who were marching in greatcoats soon felt the weight of their packs.

We passed through a provincial town, where the Army Corps Commander watched our progress, and along the road down which in days gone by

the Three Musketeers—Athos, Porthos, and Aramis —rode in search of Miladi. The three P's defeated us—the packs, the pace, and the *pavé*. Our Brigade certainly did not make a good showing on this our first appearance as a unit in the zone of war. In the distance we saw the spires and chimneys of Avranches as we marched along between the never-ending poplars, and our men fell by the wayside as the *pavé* twisted and blistered their feet. Presently the poplars ceased, and we were passing between rows of mean two-storied buildings which crowded forward to the street. Women gazed at us from the doorways, and now and then came out and gave us beer.

This was an industrial centre, a district of brick houses and factory employees; and now we left the main road and turned to one side across the series of cross-roads. It was getting dark. "Keep to your right," shouted the Staff Officers who rode up from behind. "Right! Right!" shouted the non-commissioned officers. We bumped into a regiment going to rest billets; they were Imperials —the Scottish Light Infantry. "Hullo, Canadians!" they shouted to us in welcome.

"That's my old regiment," volunteered Private McMurdy. "I was with them at Magersfontein."

A dark building with a spire loomed up in front. It looked like a church, but turned out to be a *brasserie* with a chimney.

"If you please, sir, is it true we are to be billeted

in a brewery?" asked the polite "War-horse" McMutchkin of Lieutenant Madden.

"Yes, 'A' Company and the Headquarter details," answered Lieutenant Madden.

"Thank you very much, sir; I am glad I belong to 'A' Company. It's very good of you telling me, sir; I am very much obliged."

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again.
We beat you on the Marne and we beat you on the Aisne;
We kicked you out of Armentières, and here we are again,"

sang the Devonshire Fusiliers as they passed us on the crowded road.

"There was a little hen,
And she had a wooden leg,
And she laid more eggs
Than any chickens on the farm;
And another little drink
Wouldn't do us any harm,"

sang the Canadians, who, if they were tired, didn't want to show it.

"Will this be the brewery, sir?" said the polite voice of the McMutchkin.

"Yes," said Lieutenant Madden, "this is the brewery."

"Thank you kindly, sir; and thank God also, sir."

I don't think that anyone was sorry. The packs and the multitude of our vestments had certainly told a tale, to which eighteen miles, mostly on

pavé, had added a moral, and as the men filed into their billets they were too tired to grumble. Not that anyone had any thought of complaint; they were all too interested to think of such a thing! Private Brown was dragged by main force to the Doctor next day. Removal of his shirt disclosed a gigantic abscess below his left arm, right on the line of pressure from his equipment.

"But how did you manage to march?" asked the Doctor. "It must have hurt like the devil. Why, I remember I saw you singing."

"Yes, you bet it hurt; but singing seemed to ease it."

"But why didn't you go sick?"

"I didn't want to, in case you sent me to hospital, and I want to go into the trenches."

"Well, you'll have to go to hospital."

"When, sir?"

"Right now."

"Can't you make it to-morrow, sir, and let me go up to the trenches with you to-night?"

"All right; I'll see what I can do."

Blistered feet there were in any quantity the next day; and strained ankles also; but that was on the morrow! Meantime the transport had arrived. We could hear them outside. The Padre had an idea that the war has a chastening effect on the minds of the men, and that anyone who goes through it must undergo a gradual moral improvement. He used to argue that way at mess, when

the Doctor got tired of gloating over the illegitimate population of Scotland and gave him a chance to speak. The Paymaster used to tell the Padre that he was talking rubbish, and would cite the language of his transport as an example. Then the Padre would gird up his argumentative loins and rend the Paymaster, calling him to confess that it might be worse. The Paymaster was unconvinced and couldn't see how it was possible, until Lieutenant Pillows remarked that the transport were lambs compared to his world-beaters on the guns, as far as power of expression or anything else went. I used to think that the transport must lie awake at night inventing new and subtle repartees, they seemed to have attained to such a pitch of perfection. On this occasion they were unduly eloquent; they had been on the road for sixteen hours, and had to go back another five miles to their billets! To them bed looked a very long way off, which, to some extent, must have been responsible for their state of mind.

Private McMutchkin was doomed to disappointment. The brewery was little more than a shell; certainly there was no beer in it. It had been shelled; the chimney bore evidence of two direct hits. A few empty barrels lay in the cellars, which refused to respond by the slightest splash to the most strenuous shaking. It is always the way out here: first the Germans came along and then the English, and what the one didn't drink

the other did, so the poor Canadian draws blank every time. Yet not *every* time, for there have been one or two glorious exceptions!

We walked out to look at our surroundings. The transport rumbled away in the distance. To the east of us the German star-shells were shooting upwards in the sky.

A sudden flash illuminated the sky, and a big gun boomed to our right; here and there a rifle spoke in the darkness, with its short peremptory crack. Over there lay the goal which months ago we had set out to seek; we wondered what the morrow might bring.

The officers of the Headquarters and "A" Company slept in the office of the brewery. The Padre must have found the floor hard, or perhaps his mind was not at ease; in any case, he was first out of bed, and proceeded to make a perfect nuisance of himself.

"Show a leg, Mac; come along, Madden, show a leg," came the unctuous tones.

"Go to Heligoland," said the Quartermaster.

"Go and say your prayers, Padre," mumbled Pillows, "and if you're certain of your own soul, pray for mine."

Lieutenant Madden snored on peacefully; he and Lindsay refused to be wakened.

The Adjutant was not so peacefully inclined, as a boot whistling past the Padre's head bore witness to.

"Why don't you pull the Major out of bed if you want a job?" suggested the Paymaster.

But the Major was already there—lean, and hungry, and eager to get to the trenches. Once Major Meldrum rose, sleep for the rest of us was not possible; he had a delicate, persuasive manner with the sluggards, and even the Medical Officer was persuaded finally to yield to force of circumstances.

Our training was to commence right away. Imperial officers from resting billets and from the battalions in the front line called on us. We were all very keen to learn, and they only too pleased to tell us what they knew. We were to go into the line at the Bois de Perdrix that evening—it was not possible to go by day; so, for the present, we absorbed detail and asked innumerable questions.

We went along the road to the village. Here we saw the first effect of shell-fire; the village church had for many months been the target of the German gunners. We gazed in interest at the shell-holes, the rents in the pavement, and the graves torn up. Here in the square, water-carts were filling up at the pump, their drivers sitting by unconcernedly smoking cigarettes.

The German trenches lay at most a mile from us, seething with every form of Kultur and frightfulness, and we felt very brave at having come so far. Yet here were women standing in the doors of houses, and little children playing in the street;

estaminets drove a flourishing business and shops displayed their wares—all this well within reach even of German field-guns. And here daily the shrapnel squirted and shells dropped. The destruction centred round the church; otherwise little damage had been done. The houses were all well provided with cellars, and when a shrill, high-pitched scream heralded the approaching shell, everyone promptly went to ground, until such time as the Huns ceased fire, when the interrupted business of the day was resumed.

Round this village were many British graves, carefully tended, each with its white cross, setting out the name, number, and regiment of the dead; and, as a further precaution, the same particulars are buried in a bottle at the foot of the grave. Here were representatives of those gallant Imperial units who drove the Germans out of the Bois de Perdrix in the fall of 1914, and here were also nameless graves, as a cross bore witness to: "Here lies an unknown French soldier of the 97th Regiment." Though unknown, he was not forgotten, as the flowers and ornaments that marked the spot bore witness. Farther down the road was a large mound marked by a simple cross: "Here the bodies of sixty men of the —th Regiment of Bavarians are buried," and a few yards farther, another forty lay in their nameless grave. Truly it had been an excellent killing, and their losses out of all proportion to our own!

A private of the King's Cumberlands was passing. "Were you here last autumn when these were killed?" asked Captain Wales.

"Yes, sir; we attacked across that field over there. They held us up a bit at first, but the Highland Borderers came at them through the wood with the bayonet."

"Did they fight well?"

"Who? The Highlanders?"

"No, of course not; we know the Highlanders. I mean the Germans."

"No, rotten. It was like killing sheep. If we'd only had a few more men, we'd have gone right through them; they were lying all over the place."

A Captain of the Westmorelands was walking down the road with rapid strides; he seemed unduly elated over something; he paused to ask the exact time.

"I'm just off on leave. Think of it! The Empire to-morrow night." And he was gone.

"I don't think much of those English officers," remarked John Wallace; "they're always talking of leave. I've come out here to fight, not to get leave."

"You wait, Johnny, until you've been out here for six months like those chaps," said the Quartermaster.

"Yes, when you've had trench feet for weeks and all your friends have been killed, it'll be

permanent leave you'll apply for, and not three days in London," Captain Wales added.

That evening under cover of darkness we went into the trenches. We were the guests of the Cumberland Light Infantry. From their Battalion Headquarters the way lay along the road beside the wood; here were plenty of bullets, that zipped and chirped as they sped past to find their billets. It was difficult to keep from ducking when an occasional one sang through the air really near to us. Our guide was very encouraging. "Don't hang around here; they've got a fixed rifle trained on this spot. We lost our officer here last week. There, I told you so," as a bullet hummed past and buried itself with a thud in a tree. "Hurry past this corner; they've a machine-gun on this place. We had two men hit here last night."

A sentry challenged and our guide answered. We were now in the support line. The German star-lights flying skywards from time to time illuminated the scene. Here were sandbags and much wire, and a few sentries at their posts. The remainder of the supporting company were away on working-party duties, busy putting Flanders into sandbags, or spinning the interminable spider's web of barbed wire.

We passed through a shot-torn hamlet. In the fleeting glimpses we saw the ruined houses reinforced with sandbags, and loopholes made eyes at us through a network of wire. A nasty place to

attack, and probably crammed with machine-guns. A pallid Christ hung brooding over the ruins of the village, alone, untouched, amid all the scene of destruction.

The communication trenches were filled with water, so we walked across the open; two barricades with inquisitive sentries were passed, and we entered the front-line trench.

Here all was order. The trench was dry, which was more than we had expected; also it was safe, and, to a certain extent, comfortable.

"Tell your chaps to keep their heads down. They're a bit bigger than our men," suggested a Captain of the Cumberlands.

Against the parapet of well-piled sandbags were rifle-rests, and every few yards down the firing-step stood a sentry, watching brother Bosche across the way. Our backs rested against the parados, and standing thus, there was scarce room for anyone to pass. Here and there, excavated amid the sandbags, like rudimentary cave-dwellings, were dugouts for the officers and men to sleep in; stuffed with straw and supplemented with sundry household furniture, they made fairly comfortable quarters.

The Medical Officer was of the party, and to his huge delight Private Brown* was also present, forgetful of his arm and full of eagerness; and while the others were being initiated in trench routine and discipline, they slipped along the trench

* See page 74.

searching for fresh sensations. Down the trench the Medical Officer was spotted by a youthful subaltern of the Cumberlands, who, being of a humorous disposition, suggested a visit to a listening post.

"Certainly," assented our quack, vaguely imagining that a listening post had something to do with the telephone system. The subaltern led the way, the doctor, all innocence, following recklessly. They crawled through a hole low down in the parapet, along the foot of a water-logged sap, then through a maze of barbed wire, where the Doctor got hopelessly entangled, to the detriment of his nether garments.

"Funny place to keep signallers," muttered the Doctor to himself, wondering meanwhile what a listening post really was, but loath to show his ignorance.

"When a flare goes up, grovel," whispered the subaltern, as they proceeded forward cautiously. Presently they reached a stunted willow beside a miniature stream. The Doctor had by this time lost all idea of direction.

"There they are—over there," whispered the subaltern, indicating an undulating pile of sandbags dimly visible some forty yards in front.

"Who?" asked the Doctor.

"The Germans, of course."

"Oh." Then a bright idea striking him: "And where are our trenches?"

"Why, behind us, of course"—jerking his head in their direction.

"Do you mean to tell me we are in between the two lines?" anxiously inquired the Medical Officer.

"Yes; rather nearer the Germans than our own people."

"Then what the deuce am I doing here? I am going home."

A few moments later the Medical Officer was safely back in the trench, which he preferred, sitting quietly on the firing-step, to taking an active part in any more expeditions. Here he found a private of the Cumberlands who seemed inclined to talk.

"What's your name?" inquired the Doctor.

"Smith, sir—the only Smith."

"Really, you surprise me. Why?"

"Well, I'm rather well known. You see, I always get drunk in billets, so they keep me in the front line by way of punishment for the good of my health. I've not been out for weeks."

To the Doctor this method of punishment appeared unique, but not more so than the punished one, who, seated on the top of the parapet, evinced a profound contempt for the enemy snipers.

"Don't you think your health will suffer if you sit up there? You might get a chill."

Later on, when opportunity afforded, he inquired of one of the officers as to Private Smith's antecedents and idiosyncrasies.

"Oh, Smith—he's a top-hole chap. Ready for anything. He'll go across to the German trenches and lasso one of them any time you ask him. Always good-tempered and a splendid man in the trenches."

"But he tells me he's being punished."

"Punished—yes, always. In billets he's always drunk, damned nuisance, wanting to fight; so we keep him in the front line."

A Canadian came down the trench.

"Is the Medical Officer here?"

"Yes," said the Doctor from his seat on the firing-step.

"You're wanted; there's a man badly hit."

The Medical Officer moved along the trench.

There it lay, all that remained of one of the best boys in the regiment, the light of an electric torch streaming on his white and upturned face, a small blue mark in the centre of his forehead. It was Private Brown.

"How did it happen?" asked the Medical Officer.

"He said he was to go to hospital to-morrow and wanted to have a shot at the Germans," answered one of the Cumberlands.

He was quite dead, but on the still, pale face was a look of peaceful satisfaction.

When we looked at the trenches, and recognized the work which had been put in to make them habitable, and thought of the thin line that had

held on for so many weary months in winter, we felt we were beginning to learn. In those early days there were no sandbags, the wire amounted at times to only one strand, and everyone was in the front-line trench. Cooks, parsons, batmen, and paymasters. We had read of the Battle of Ypres, and the thin screen of dismounted cavalry who held the line from Zandvoorde south to opposite Frelinghein, but now, for the first time, we understood what it had really meant. And here we found representatives of the famous regiments who had taken part in those glorious early days. The trenches were dry now, and, wrapped like cocoons in a mesh of wire, were comparatively safe; but we thought of the days of the single strand, of the troops standing knee-deep in water, of the trenches sliding and puddling across the map, and the endless anxiety and weary waiting. We hoped we might do as well as those who had gone before.

Meantime others of our battalion had been hard at work. Working-parties had been busy wiring and sand-bagging, and when we returned to the brewery, we found the night had not forgotten to take its toll. One officer and one man killed, and two men wounded. It was Lieutenant Beaumont, one of our very best. The first on every parade and duty, and now the first to go. Ask of his fellow-officers and the men under him if you want to know. His name stands large in the little Flemish churchyard, but his epitaph is written for ever in

their hearts. Private Brown lies beside him, for in the churchyard all ranks are equal. They were our first.

Later on we became more accustomed to losing our friends, but with the first few it is always hard.

The next afternoon we went Hun-shooting. Up through the wood we picked our way, along Waterloo Place, and into Piccadilly, then up Shaftesbury Avenue and Tottenham Court Road. Turning to the right in the Euston Road, we arrived at the ruined *estaminet*. Here the upper floor provided an excellent observation post.

A hundred yards in front of us lay our own trenches, steeped in the slumber which attends the consumption of a midday meal of Army rations, and beyond them, another hundred and fifty yards, the Hun line of sandbags. The Colonel with a borrowed rifle, ensconced behind a loophole of sandbags, lay waiting an opportunity. It was a good rifle, as seventeen notches on the stock bore witness to, but the Hun was crafty as a badger. Occasionally a head would show for an all too fleeting second, but that was all. They also were steeped in somnolence. Captain Grosvenor at another angle of the building also drew blank. Hun-hunting was evidently a difficult amusement.

That night we visited the Westmorelands. There was a company relief taking place. No parade or any form of military ostentation. At

the sound of a whistle the men left their billets, and like workmen going to their daily task, wandered towards the trenches. In twos and threes, selecting the route that pleased them best, they straggled across country; at the entrance of the trench a sergeant noted down their names as they filed in. It might have been a shift of coal-miners entering the pit-head. The company officers explained the phenomenon by saying that their casualties in going across country in isolated groups in this manner were much less.

We had a full parade of Cook's tourists again. The Quartermaster, his Highland blood afire, led the way. The Padre, in an unbecoming woolly helmet that looked like a melted mitre, and the Paymaster in gumboots, followed him enthusiastically.

Here was a shattered convent, just behind the front line, and here the party paused. Zip! Biff! Bang! The Quartermaster jumped a foot in the air, and then remembering about twenty seconds too late ducked, as a cloud of broken brick from the wall just above his head powdered him with fine dust. The Padre smiled. Judging from his sermons, he appears to have plenty of imagination, but it all seems to go when the bullets start to flop around.

The Doctor is always explaining this matter to us. He maintains that in this war, which he says is quite the worst war he has taken part in during forty

years, there is no such thing as fear. Some people with no imagination can go on under fire indefinitely, as they don't think what it might mean to have one's spinal cord severed, or to be blinded by a bursting shell. He says that he is constantly thinking out what he calls anatomical relationships, and considering what organs a bullet hitting him in a certain place at a certain angle will penetrate.

He has undoubtedly a morbid mind, and the Adjutant is threatening to make him take his meals by himself, unless he discontinues this practice.

In any case, the Padre is wonderful; his soul may be at peace—perhaps that is the reason. If so, the Doctor's and the Quartermaster's must be in a turmoil. The Paymaster, on the other hand, shows a wonderful fortitude. They say he has estimated his chances of longevity by some actuarial system of his own—the flat surface of his profile in proportion to the entire extent of the British front as x is to a bullet. Nobody knows what he means by this, especially as his profile is anything but flat; but he is satisfied that if he visits the trenches twice a week during the next five years, his chances of being hit are 1 in 439,625. As an order has just appeared prohibiting Paymasters from entering the front line, his expectations of life would appear to be still more rosy.

We had spent a week with these two famous regiments, and they had done us proud, en-

couraging us when it was seemly and showing us how best to correct our weaknesses. They found us quick to learn just as they were ready to teach; and the lessons the finest in the world. When we left the Bois de Perdrix our period of apprenticeship was over; all that remained was to put it in practice. When we left Maurice we had been told we were to return there after our first spell in the trenches, but evidently the authorities were pleased with us, for we were told, to our profound satisfaction, that we had not been found wanting, and were to hold a piece of line of our own.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLORY OF WAR

A HIGHLAND battalion was coming down the road; we politely drew to one side to let it pass. Of course, we had been initiated, but still we were new to the game, compared to these representatives of the "iron division"! They had spent the winter up to their knees in the water of the trenches, which slopped around the landscape, and for months they had been gazing across the remains of a parapet, whose sandbags had disappeared in the mud, and at a few dilapidated strands of barbed wire. These were the gay Gordons. Perhaps at the moment they hardly could be described as gay, but they looked their very best.

Taking over trenches is always rather a test for those new at the game. There are abundant facilities for getting lost, and for the nervous an excellent opportunity to get rattled; but on this the first occasion that we had taken over a line for ourselves we didn't do badly. I heard the Adjutant damning the Doctor, who might in perfect fairness have damned back, which would not have been subservient to good order and discipline, and

would certainly not have been polite; although in this case he was perfectly in the right. Six months ago he would probably have told the Adjutant all about it, but in this instance he merely registered a mental note to scarify the petulant one in private. Down the road, behind the battalion, the transport could be heard swearing its way towards the trenches. The language was really rather picturesque, but the Padre, standing at the dressing-station door, shook his head and said it was shocking. The transport officer was not so careful of his remarks as he might have been; in fact, some of his expressions were rather lurid, but the result was excellent: the transport arrived every time!

By nine o'clock the relief was finished, and we wandered up to visit the Battalion Headquarters. The night was dark, but on three sides of us the German star-shells rose and fell. It is, I suppose, due to some physical law that, no matter where one stands in the light at night, as judged by the falling starlight, one always appears to be in a salient. I asked our local member of the Church how he explained this, and he mumbled something about the rotundity of the earth's surface, or the conformation of the ground, and at once returned to the subject of the transport's language. The Padre evidently didn't know, and was merely bluffing.

We strolled up the road, a narrow road, but with

a wonderful surface—considering what had been required of it during the previous months—a row of willows on our left, a deep ditch on our right. A shadow loomed up, a farm-house and two hay-stacks. A sentry challenged in the darkness, with a rattle of arms and a sharp inquiry. This was the billet of our support company. Outside their first-line, transport limbers were handing out supplies. Not a light showed; there was little talking, and all to the point. Could this be the same chattering, cigarette-smoking Canadian Militia of Valcartier ?

We went inside. Captain Cope and Lieutenant Bromfield greeted us. They were delighted with their billets, which were better than they had expected. We wandered down the road. There was a lot of rifle-fire, but the work of unloading the limbers went on undisturbed. The sergeant in charge said the shots were all " overs," and were missing the road by yards. Round the bend we came on a shrine, untouched, a few blackened walls, a pile of straw—all that was left of the roof and sides of Dead Pig Farm. Another challenge from the darkness we answered to the best of our ability, but our interrogator was invisible.

" Where the devil are you ?" demanded our importunate transport officer, his voice quivering with emotion and a man-eating gleam in his eye. " How the Hades can I advance and be recognized when I don't know where you are ?" The hectic

expressions of the transport officer were not without effect; thus exhorted, a figure emerged from the seclusion of the shrine, which stood by the road-side, and proceeded to go through the process of recognizing us.

"Pass, friend; all's well."

"All's well," sniffed Lieutenant Cousins as we proceeded on our way. "I'm hanged if it is!"

"I like a sentry who stands right in the middle of the road, and who is armed with a lantern, so that you see him a mile off. This Jack-in-the-box business is rather trying on the nerves," commented the Doctor.

The Padre was doubtful. He found it was not quite proper; this misappropriation of Church property for such base uses as a sentry-box was hardly justifiable.

"Absolute rubbish!" said the Quartermaster. "He's a wise man, and he's paying you and your religion a high compliment. Shrines and crucifixes don't get hit, and well your sentry knows it."

The Quartermaster was right, as he usually was: amid the wrecks of towns and villages, with houses flattened to the ground and gardens and roads torn with shot and shell, the shrines and crucifixes are rarely touched. Churches may be wrecked, their steeples come toppling to the ground, and their roofs burn, but the high altar will escape destruction. And this is the more remarkable as it is at the cross-roads, where these sacred symbols are

mainly to be found, that the Germans have a peculiar penchant for dropping their high explosive.

While the transport officer was nosing his way through the darkness like a well-trained pointer, the Padre and the Quartermaster plunged into a religious controversy. The Padre slumped for stone altars and incense, while Mac urged the claims of John Knox and Jenny Geddes.

"John Knox may have been all right, but I could never forgive the way the old blighter spoke to Queen Mary. He certainly must have bored her to tears, besides being excessively rude to her," remarked the Doctor.

Little Willy, alias Bill Minor, alias Lieutenant Cousins, had just located the Battalion Headquarters. In front of us loomed a long dark object. This, we were informed, was the convent wall.

"Good!" said the Paymaster. This was the first time he had betrayed any interest in the night's proceedings. "Where are the nuns?"

Here we found the headquarters. Down eight steps, turn to the right through a mackintosh sheet, down two more steps, and we are in the dugout. Bunks down either side stuffed with straw, a stove at the far end, in the centre a long narrow table—at once the orderly room and the mess mahogany.

Here we find first the O.C., duly attired in gumboots and a Balaclava cap, resting quietly and

reading a newspaper while waiting to go round the trenches. Secondly, Major Meldrum—alert, eager, and implacable, thirsting to carve or capture any German at a moment's notice. He was seated on a box of bombs, and seemed entirely at his ease. Thirdly, the Adjutant, much harassed and overworked, with the entire orderly-room literature divided between the dugout table and his trousers pocket.

Enter an orderly. Orderly to Adjutant: "You're wanted on the 'phone. Brigade Headquarters, sir."

Adjutant: "Damn!"

Exit orderly. Exit Adjutant.

The Quartermaster laughs, the Padre endeavours to look shocked, but merely succeeds in shaking his head. The remainder continue their various pursuits undisturbed.

Enter Adjutant. Adjutant to Medical Officer: "What the devil do you mean by putting your dressing-station twenty miles behind the German lines?"

"I never did."

"That's the worst of trusting to a pill-seller. I sent your map reference straight into Brigade without checking it up. Now Brigade rings up and wants to know if you've deserted, or if you're spending the summer in Lille. What map did you use?"

The inarticulate Medical Officer merely handed

the sheet A 99 to the outraged Adjutant. "Well, why in the name of all the holy gods do you call it A 98? For Heaven's sake stick to pills and poultices, and get a man to run your map locations for you!"

Enter orderly. Orderly to Adjutant: "You're wanted on the 'phone."

Adjutant: "Damn!"

Exit orderly. Exit Adjutant.

Outside the sound of men marching. A sentry challenges, the party halts.

Enter Adjutant. Adjutant to Colonel: "Brigade wants to know if we've any skilled telegraph operators in the battalion."

Colonel: "Notify the companies. We'll soon have nobody left in the battalion at all."

Enter orderly. Orderly to Adjutant: "You're wanted on the 'phone, sir."

Adjutant: "Damn!"

Exit orderly. Exit Adjutant.

We now leave the headquarters dugout, with its low roof, its straw-filled bunks, the damp floor-boards and smoking stove, and ascend to the ground-level. Here in the shadow of the convent wall is a road, raised above the immediately surrounding country, and here are dugouts and stores, ammunition-boxes, rolls of barbed wire, and entrenching tools. For this is a war of wire and trench, of sap and machine-guns, of much patient waiting and thoughtful pauses.

There is a delightful feeling of security in six inches of convent wall. Every now and then a bullet slaps on the far side with a splash of nickel, and a splutter of broken brick.

We wander along the wall, stumbling in the dark. Here are the remains of the convent, white and ghastly wreckage in the darkness. We drop through a hole in the wall into the enclosure, and we are in the convent garden.

Here, in days gone by, the nuns wandered in pious meditation, pressing the daisies with their dainty feet, as they speculated on the mysteries of life and death. We would sooner discuss the vagaries of wine and song and dance, but that is not the point—nuns are nuns, and we are merely details. Here, beside a flooded communication trench, through some barbed-wire entanglements, we pass across the ever-sacred enclosure. Our way was not without its dangers. Shell-holes filled with water gaped on all sides, while trenches, whether for drainage or communication, yawned at our feet, and were crossed in the fleeting glow of the falling starlight.

Sergeant Ramrod, who was of the party, was not too fortunate, as a splash in the darkness proclaimed. He chose what was possibly the deepest part of the trench to disappear into, and was with difficulty rescued. He was mud from the points of his moustache to the inside of his cholera belt, and where he was not mud, he was water. He

got little comfort, as a voice from the darkness muttered: "There goes that sanguinary fool Ramrod; always shoving his nose into things that don't concern him." He was advised to retire to the rear, and get a wash and brush-up at the dressing-station.

We arrived at the front line without any further casualty. Here we found "A" Company. "Come in and make yourselves at home!" the officers shouted as we butted into their commodious château. It was all above ground; the east wall of the convent enclosure formed the back, and the rest of the hut was of the lean-to species. Here were Major Berkeley, John Wallace, and Lieutenants Puddiphat and Pillows. "What will you drink? Tea, coffee, cocoa, rum, soup, or bovril? Sorry they're mostly teetotal, but we haven't arranged our source of supply yet."

The parson and the Doctor made themselves at home, and accepted the proffered delicacies, the Padre bovril and the Medical Officer something stronger.

"Has the Colonel found his gumboots yet? Is he coming round to-night? How's Grosvenor's liver?" The clerical and medical professions did their best to answer these questions. Suddenly the door of the hut was thrown open, and a small eager officer entered. "What I say is, 'one man one woman.' Pillows, you Hun! you've got your feet on my bed!" It was Lieutenant Bridges.

"What's all that firing?" asked the Major.

"Oh, nothing; only the Highlanders on the right with the wind up. They're crazy, anyhow. They've probably had too much rum."

The Padre and Medical Officer wandered down the trench. It was dark, but still. On the firing-steps, peering across at No Man's Land, were the sentries, stamping their feet as they stood with their hands in their pockets. From time to time, as the two non-combatants progressed, they were challenged, and their identity inquired into. The Bosche was quiet, but from time to time a rifle-shot rang out, our people answering not at all.

It was the Bois de Perdrix, and yet not the same. There, we were serving our apprenticeship; here, we had taken out our papers. We had not been found wanting—rather otherwise, I imagine—and we were at last beyond the incubation stage, and full-blown accredited members of the British Expeditionary Force. There were Imperial troops to right and left of us, but for three miles of line were Canadians and Canadians only. It was a great night for Canada, a great night for the Empire also.

We were not without alarms, as The Mackintosh knew to his cost. On one occasion in the small hours of the morning, he had wandered up to the front line to inquire into a certain matter of shortages. This was after we had held our own

particular bit for three days. The matter settled, he was standing in the trench talking to Lieutenant Allonby. The night was dark and without a breeze, but for once the Canadians had the wind up. Gusts of rifle-fire on either side of us broke the stillness of the night; the company to our left suddenly opened up a rapid independent fire, and a sentry on the firing-step beside the Quartermaster suddenly discharged his rifle over the parapet shouting: "Here they come, the sons of Bosches!"

Down the line went the order, "No. 12 Platoon, stand to!" The firing-step was lined with dark crouching figures peering into the darkness. Off came the covers of the machine-guns. Not a shot was fired. In the darkness of the trench the Quartermaster waited, wondering for hour-long seconds, when the first German would jump over the parapet, and find the third button of his tunic with the point of a bayonet.

Lieutenant Allonby, standing beside the now uncertain sentry, inquired what he had seen. A moment before he had been positive of seeing black figures wandering along that line of willows. Now he began to be uncertain. Everything was silent. Up went a German star-shell; the row of willows stood out brightly in relief.

"What the Hades are you doing, old-timer!" said Lieutenant Hooly, strolling into the trench from the right. "Practising your bunch at squad drill?"

"No, you Siwash! Merely a reed shaking in the wilderness. No. 12, stand down!" said Allonby.

"Man Jeff, my heart was fairly in my mouth. I wish you'd not do these fancy tricks when I come to call on you," said the Quartermaster.

A voice floated through the darkness from the left, inquiring, "How do you like standing to, No. 12?" Another reedy whisper came from the right, "Have another drop of rum, old dear, to clear your eyesight!"

Then there were the spies. The Engineers were always seeing them—yes, and other people too. But the Engineers enjoyed almost a monopoly in this particular line. Wonderfully authentic histories they brought in of working-parties sniped at from a short distance, of dark figures creeping away in the darkness, of cachés of bully-beef found in deserted farm-houses, and of discarded civilian clothes. They were always being fired at point-blank range, but somehow the mysterious assailant always managed to steal away in the darkness. At their request we detailed search-parties, who wandered about through the mud strafing the sappers, and entirely bored by their optic hallucinations, on which they based the very slightest belief.

The activities of this system of espionage was not confined to night. Tales were brought to us of peasant farmers who placidly ploughed the soil with a Mauser rifle shoved down the leg of their trousers. When the end of the furrow was reached

it was the practice of the ploughman to extract his weapon from his trousers, and shoot the nearest Thomas Atkins in the back!

Then there were windmills that semaphored signals across to the enemy's lines; carrier pigeons winging their way with messages; and dogs with despatches tied to their necks.

Honest John Wallace, formerly of the York City Police, Massachusetts, U.S.A., our little Sherlock Holmes, was of a particularly suspicious nature. Everyone was a spy until found to be otherwise. One night, wandering in the vicinity of Plumbois, he noticed a light shining in a window facing the enemy lines, a light that seemed to signal. At once his interest was aroused, and, like the wise men of old on seeing the star of Bethlehem, he headed in that direction. Through ditches, barbed wire, hedges, and over ploughed fields, he stubbornly plodded onward. The light flashed and flickered; dots and dashes blazed through John's heated imagination. "A spy at last! and signalling too!" Muddied, plastered, torn, and wearied, Honest John arrived at the house. Cautiously and on tiptoe he approached the ground-floor windows, from whence the accusing light beamed, and peered discreetly inside. There a man was seated, a man of his own company, quite above suspicion and rejoicing in the name of William Wallace. By a candle he was darning a large hole in the seat of his trousers,

and his arm, rising and falling in front of the light in awkward manipulation of his needle, formed the dots and dashes that Honest John had diagnosed as signals.

We returned from our first five days in the trenches, on the whole quite pleased with ourselves. We had not been shot at more than was really necessary, and we had not suffered much from "wind." We returned to rest in billets in Plumbois. Reserve billets meant rest and baths. The former welcome, the latter a species of divine interference.

> "We took our bath and we wallowed,
> For, Lord! we needed it so."

A hot bath in a vat in a brewery, with oceans of hot water and clean clothes at the finish. We blessed the medical authorities and felt like new men.

The men were billeted in barns. They were becoming quite used to barns—in fact, they were almost specialists on the subject. There were big barns and small barns; barns that were smelly and others merely musty; barns with roofs, and barns when the only covering was the stars; barns with live-stock and barns without, but barns all the time.

The officers were for the most part quartered in farm-houses, and these varied as did the barns. The barns and houses formed a courtyard, in the

centre of which was the slimy, wobbling manure-heap, where monstrous pigs wallowed, ducks waddled, and hens scratched anxiously. It was always the same: the wealth of Flanders lay in our midst, evil-looking and vile-smelling, hoarded penuriously, to be later on taken out and decanted on the fields. At first we were horrified, but later on we became indifferent. However, the text-books say an open smell is a healthy smell, and there was no doubt about its being open. It flaunted itself in our faces, blew into our nostrils, and at night, though unseen, it was still eternal. It had one good effect, I think: everyone learnt to boil their water.

The headquarters of the Pompadours was in the village; here they lived in royal luxury with a dropsical heroine, who, faithful to her Lares and Penates, refused to be influenced by hostile shell-fire. Funnily enough, the house was never hit. The ex-Massachusetts detective at once was on the lady's trail. The inference was obvious: the lady was a spy, and the Huns were sparing her house for this reason! Furthermore, whenever the shelling commenced she retired at once to the cellar. Manifestly there must be a telephone there, and she was signalling outers and bull's-eyes to the Bosche. Honest John bided his time, and the next shelling found him thundering on the cellar door. Here, after a delay, he was admitted. Brushing the lady high-handedly aside, he de-

scended to the depths, from whence ascended the light of a lamp. Here were rows and rows of bottles, several ponderous casks, but no telephone, only the Doctor !

" Hullo, Johnnie ! gone to ground ? Have a glass of sherry wine and a 'am sandwich."

" What the devil are you doing here, Doc. ?"

" Nothing, darling, only comforting Madam, and trying some of the vintages."

Such warfare cannot last for ever, and the Brigadier ordered us to go route-marching. Behold a company of the Pompadours, now war-worn veterans, swinging their rumps through the village of Messena. On the outskirts was halted an Imperial Territorial regiment, newly arrived in the country. Chucking a mighty chest, the Pompadours sniffed. Captain Wales halted his command; they fell out, and oh, the lies they told ! Shot and shell raining on the front-line trench, bombs dropping from above, mines bursting beneath their feet. All recounted with a half-contemptuous shrug of the shoulders and an air of self-satisfied indifference. I don't know how many months they said they had stood in the water-logged trenches, or how many attacks they had repelled at the point of the bayonet, or what their casualties had been, but they pulled the Territorial leg from Halifax to Nanaimo and then from Dan to Beersheba. And those new troops stood round in silent, awestruck reverence, for surely

these must be heroes! The Pompadours left them on the roadside, silent, stricken dumb.

"Say, old-timer, you don't half peddle the Bull when you get started," remarked Private Waters as they humped it down the road.

The Brigadier was not yet satisfied, for he believed in efficiency, so we had to stand to at night. Quietly the order was given, and stealthily the men fell into their places. Limbers were loaded and water-carts harnessed up. No talking, for a wonder; no one dropped a rifle on the ground; the orders, softly spoken, were as quietly obeyed, and secretly and silently the companies filed off like ghosts in the night to their various positions. We, who had watched with interest the gradual evolution of the last few months, were filled with astonishment. Was it possible that these quiet, self-contained shadows, moving so cautiously in the dark, were the same garrulous, cigarette-smoking militiamen who had assembled a few months previously on Valcartier's plain?

And so our rest in billets came to an end. The next night we relieved the Saskatoons. We were getting down to it in great style; the Government equipment had been supplemented in various ways. Here a circular loaf impaled on the point of a bayonet; there two bottles of wine balanced one another round a willing neck; bundles of fire-wood and bags of coal, bedroom slippers, even a bed-quilt, made their way into the trenches, and

all sorts of cooking utensils, concertinas, and mouth-organs.

> "For Maryland is Fairyland,
> And he's promised my wife to see
> When the lads from the West of Canada
> And our home is across the sea."

We returned to our convent wall. The head-quarters burrowed in their dugout, and the Doctor resumed his quarters in the funereal hearse, which stood stuck in the mud hard by.

"And a very appropriate residence too, for our 'Pills,'" commented the Adjutant, who, being born south of the border, was always making jokes which the Doctor couldn't see. When this type of cheap witticism got beyond all bearing, the Medical Officer would seek out the Quartermaster, and together they would strafe the English, talking of Sassenachs and hinting at dark deeds, and the Quartermaster would think regretfully of his Skein-dhu and the Medical Officer would rattle his pill-box threateningly in its scabbard.

The companies returned to their trenches, which they always said the Saskatoons left in a horrible condition! Of course, no work had ever been done, but then no one ever works but ourselves. The bath-mats had been broken up and used for firewood, and all the pumps were out of business. And those sons of farmers had tried to drain water uphill, and left food and ammunition lying about all over the trenches. It was ever

the same: the outgoing battalion was always guilty of every crime of omission and commission mentioned in the decalogue. Well, I expect the Saskatoons were no worse than anyone else, but it was ever so.

So the routine of trench warfare recommenced, and the front-line trench is the best place to be in in this war. For there everyone forgets to trouble about the war. Everyone in the front line is cheerful, and here one laughs the whole day and most of the night too. The farther back you go to supports, rest billets, the base, and finally to Blighty, the more dismal you become. Cheerfulness appears to increase in the inverse ratio to safety, and it is the same with grumbling. I have heard an A.S.C. sergeant, who was unable to obtain his morning bath, make more noise about it than a Major of the line who had been sleeping in wet mud for five days.

Don't let it be thought for a moment that I would belittle the Army Service Corps. That would indeed be biting the hand that feeds us, and that fed us exceedingly well for many months. Now, and always, I salute them!

Yes, there in the front line we were cheerful. But there are the wee sma' hours just abune the twal, when the vital tides are at their teeniest, weeniest ebb. Then the sentries, staring across the dripping wire, waiting for the dismal dawn, as the chill creeps into their bones, are apt to let their

thoughts wander. Then the imagination gets to work and conjures up happy images of comfortable beds, eiderdowns, and hot-water bottles. Yes, and more than hot-water bottles, too ! Then you wonder which is the bigger, the hollow in your stomach or the ache in your heart. Then it is that our all-seeing Government steps in and, as a corrective, the rum arrives.

The morning was cold—cold with the dampness of clinging vapour. Major Berkeley and Captain Wallace, lingering in the dismal chillness, noted the growing dawn and the gloomy frigidity of the surroundings. The sentries on the firing-step, gazing through the misty drizzle at the sodden wire, were silent; occasionally one stamped his feet or buried his chin more deeply in his upturned collar. The world seemed sad, slushy, and sunk in a sea of mud and despondency.

A man passed carrying a pannikin, then another. In the grey east a haggard dawn was struggling with the desolate darkness; then, somewhere along the trench someone started to whistle; the lilt of a song rose in the gloom. Down the trench three figures, grouped round an object on the ground, were laughing. It was a rum-jar, the concrete means of bringing new comfort to sixty-four willing souls. "Have some rum, Wallace," said the Major. "Good wine gladdeneth the heart; it goes just right at this time in the morning." As the two officers retired into their dugout, the day,

already brightening, was glowing in the east, and the whole trench was singing.

And yet there are those who would do away with the rum ration! All those blundering, misinformed busybodies, who would preach total abstinence on the parapet at 4 a.m. have no idea what it is like in a British trench in the small hours of the morning! I can only assure them they would be better in the firing-line than trying to rob the soldier of his rum. There are no teetotallers in the trench at dawn when the rum comes round.

Ever since we had arrived in France, the stimulating effect of our surroundings had caused the outgoing mail to increase enormously in extent. Men who formerly had rarely set pen to paper now slung ink, and revelled in indelible pencils, with a zeal worthy of a better cause. On our first arrival at Maurice, the Colonel decreed that the headquarters should superintend and overlook the efforts of the company officers. Behold, therefore, a select group consisting of the man of God, Pills, Pay, and the Quartermaster, and the second in command seated round a cleared mess-table, in the centre of which reposes a heterogeneous pile of correspondence.

In a lunatic asylum, I understand, it is the custom for the doctors to read the letters written by the patients, in order to obtain an insight into the whirlwind of their inner consciousness. Certainly

in a battalion the characteristics of the rank and file stand out more clearly in profile through the medium of their letters. Men of whom one would have least believed it were found to possess literary abilities of a high order, while the most unpromising exterior at times concealed a power and elegance of descriptive eloquence! We unearthed by this means poets, philosophers, and thinkers. Of course, there was the other side of the picture, and some, of whom great things might have been expected, were found to be scarcely able to hold a pen!

There was the simple-minded enthusiast who wrote of the fine time he was having, how he was fit, and hoped everyone at home was well. He was a man to look up to; he never allowed that there was any possibility of danger; unselfish and solicitous for others' hopes and fears, he would wait until the war was over to tell his story.

Then there was the morbid liar, endeavouring to create an impression by manufacturing possibilities which did not exist.

"DEAR GWEN," he wrote (the Paymaster thought it ought to be "Poor Gwen"),—"While I write to you the shells are screaming overhead and bursting all round us. Sid Allen has just got his. He screamed something terrible when the shell hit him. They say he will die. I just smile at the shells when they land near me. I can hardly see to write, as the sky is dark with the bullets flying

overhead. The noise is maddening. I do not expect to be alive when I next write."

"I hope to Heaven he won't be!" remarked the Paymaster as he laid down the letter. "I wonder how Allonby let that rubbish through. I shall advise him to 'run' that person for conduct subversive of good order and discipline, and being a damned liar into the bargain."

"How would 'conduct prejudicial to the good morals of Gwen' do?" suggested the Adjutant.

And this, mark you, when we were still at Maurice, fifteen miles from the firing-line, where we had to go outside the house in order to hear the guns booming in the distance! Sid Allen, by the way, was suffering from a kick from a mule—that was the only shell that hit him.

Then there was also the critical scribe, whose letters evinced an entire disapproval of the general conduct of the war, a slavish admiration of the Germans, and conveyed the information that he, at least, would and could run the show, with enormous advantage to the Empire as a whole. He was in many ways a more pestilential form of nuisance than the other.

They generally chose mothers or elderly aunts to confide their views to, and I tremble to think to what depths of doubt and uncertainty their female relatives must have been reduced, by the communication of these ill-timed expressions of opinion.

"DEAR AUNT KATE,—I have not heard from you for three days, but that is not surprising, as the postal arrangements are so terribly mishandled. There is only one delivery of letters a day, and that is at night. Did you ever hear of such mismanagement? I feel certain that the Germans have three or four deliveries a day.

"My company officer, a very stupid man" ("That's rather hard on Wallace, isn't it?" mused the Doctor), "is always sending my letters back, as he says they would shock and sadden the Censor. I would use a green envelope if I had one, but unfortunately I have not.

"We have almost no artillery, and what there is, is constantly being hit by the Germans, who are much superior to us. Our artillery is constantly killing our own men, who are always terrified when our guns open fire.

"Our staff is quite incapable. There are spies all over the country. The Engineer officers are always seeing them and being sniped at. Belgian farmers wander about at night behind our lines, pretending to light their pipes and signalling to the Germans by this means. Spies also signal by means of windmills, this especially on windy days.

"Carrier-pigeons constantly fly over our lines. My Captain, who is very ignorant, says they are wood-pigeons. There is no doubt they are used for carrying messages.

"We have quite lost the command of the air.

I don't think we ever had it. Our aeroplanes are constantly getting lost, and fly all over the German lines and get fired at by their air-guns. The splinters of shell fall upon our men below, and by this means thousands have been killed. The German air service is much better arranged. Their aeroplanes never come over our lines at all, thereby showing how much better their maps are than ours. If our guns fire at them they at once come to the ground, so that none of their infantry get hit by the shell fragments. By this means alone the Germans save the lives of thousands of their soldiers !"

And so on indefinitely, until the Doctor, who was reading the document, gnashed his teeth and foamed at the mouth.

The cheerful optimist was better reading.

"DEAR MOTHER" (he scribbled, on a tattered rag of newspaper wrapper),—"This war is sure a son of a pig, but believe me I shall stick to it closer than mud to a blanket.

"Yours lovingly,

"ED."

We plumbed all manner of hidden depths in the reading of these letters, and by so doing obtained an understanding of our friends in the rank and file, which otherwise might have been denied us.

Truly the methods of the asylum doctors have something to recommend them.

It was the 17th of Ireland, and as such honoured by all good Hibernians. Major Meldrum, as befitting one of the ancient order, was early in the front-line trench, and soon, as a result of his labours, most of the battalion were wearing o' the green. In his wake, following down the front line at an interval of half a dozen bays, came the Doctor. Presently, spotting a determined-looking individual, he inquired why he was not adorned with a verdant sprig of shamrock.

"I'm from Glengarry," came the curt rejoinder.

"Good for you, old sport," returned the Doctor. "Have some Scotch."

"You bet! Here's to Saint Andrew."

The Major might be armed with a bale of shamrock, but the Medical Officer was thrice armed as, with three bottles of Johnny Walker, he delicately picked his way down the trench. Here and there he noted a Scotsman—some from Nova Scotia, some from Glengarry, and some from north of the Tweed. Funnily enough, they seemed to increase in number as he progressed farther, until finally he reached "B" Company on the return right. Here they were apparently all Scottish!

"Well, sorr, here's good luck to ould Scotland, and three cheers for Saint Andrew!" This from a brawny warrior in the act of drinking. Taking off his cap, he waved it round his head, and a large

bit of shamrock fell to the ground. A bullet spat over the parapet and reminded us that our dear friends opposite had other things to do than discuss the various merits of patron saints.

"Here, I thought you said you were a Scotsman," said the Medical Officer doubtfully.

"So I am, sorr; one of the best when there's any whisky around! But for the most part I was born in the County av Cork, and me name's O'Flanaghan."

About this time we received orders that we were to be ready to support an attack which was taking place on our right. If everything there was successful, we were to do something ourselves. The events of the battle have now become matters of history. Our own share was practically nil, but such as it was we did nothing to discredit ourselves. We suffered a few casualties, and one that we could ill afford.

Major Rawlins, at once one of our best and most popular officers, was unfortunately shot while sniping at a German loophole. Perhaps he had not taken sufficient precautions to protect himself; perchance he deemed the Hun a poorer marksman than he really was. With a row of ribbons stretching across his breast he had fought all round the Empire; a fearless, gallant soldier, we laid him to rest behind our convent wall, and felt the world was the poorer by his going.

He had a peculiar method of strafing the Hun.

Armed with a speaking-trumpet, he would hurl defiances across at the distant trenches, mocking our enemies and rousing them to retaliate. The result would be a splutter of rifle-fire, bullets singing over the parapet or burying themselves in the sandbags. By this means the enemy were located and a likely sniper spotted, ready for the Major's answer. Nobody enjoyed trench warfare more than the Major, yet he was always itching to get closer to the enemy.

Our funerals behind the convent wall took place always after dark. As we had no communication trenches, it was not possible to get a stretcher out during the daylight. In the dark we gathered beside the open grave, the Colonel and such officers and men who could be spared from duty. The Padre, reading the beautiful lines by the aid of an electric torch, conducted the service. Thus we bade farewell to those who had been our friends.

While we were at Plumbois we got the casualty return of our engagement fought by the Imperial troops on the Western front. The Colonel made the announcement at mess, after the waiters had withdrawn. He pointed out that our losses had been extremely heavy, and that he didn't want them to be too widely discussed. He quoted seven thousand as the sum total. I still remember with what concern we received the news. Seven thousand appeared a tremendous figure in those days.

Yet in view of recent losses, what a drop in the ocean !

The men in the front line didn't have all the fun, however, and occasionally the support company had their own little excitements. Captains Cope and Hardwick were seated at tea discussing a new parcel from Fortnum and Mason which Lieutenant Bromfield had just fallen heir to, through the kindness of a devoted relative. A bullet flicked through the open window, parting Bromfield's hair and administering a slight scalp wound, and buried itself in the wall of the room. A few days later they were shelled out of their farm, and had to take refuge behind some haystacks. A haystack always seemed pretty good to me: it was a nice soft protection from high-calibre shells. Even a direct hit was likely to cause very little trouble, and if the gentle Hun set it on fire you could always take cover in the smoke-cloud.

The last scene I remember along our convent wall, for so it will always be called by the Pompadours, was the Doctor in heated controversy with two of our Engineer officers. For two days he had, at the earnest request of the Colonel, been endeavouring to drain a patch of land, the centre of which was occupied by a pool of water, in which the bodies of five dead horses lay. For two days the stretcher-bearers sweated over pumps, part of a gigantic drainage scheme. When I saw him, the Engineers had just pointed out that the

water, which he fondly imagined was draining away in a deep ditch, was simply running round the field and coming back from where it started! As nature abhors a vacuum, so the thought of a vicious circle is poison to the medical mind, and the Medical Officer was deeply annoyed that the Engineers were the ones to show him his mistake.

"What do you people think you know about drainage? You don't know everything, although you think you do. This is public health, not public works."

CHAPTER VII

FLOUNDERING IN FLANDERS

All good things come to an end, and already Plumbois, the convent wall, and our rest billet with the dropsical heroine, were mere memories. We were at Misere, in luxurious billets, being carefully rested and fattened up for the killing. Here we practised the attack, charging across ploughed fields, which took us up to the knees in the soft mud of Flanders. Excellent exercise, but somewhat trying to the wind, where for a month the regiment has held its morning parades on the firing-step of a trench. So to improve our wind we went for route marches—route marches along country lanes with nature awakening to the touch of spring. The hedgerows were breaking into bud, and the woods were bright with primroses and violets. The air was balmy and the days bright, as the winds and storms of March yielded to the sunshine and soft April showers.

The Mackintosh and the Medical Officer went about with an air of grave detachment, for quartered in Misere was a Highland host. Here were Perthshire Highlanders, the Ross-shire Rangers, the

Highland Borderers, the Renfrew Light Infantry, all engaged in the same occupation as ourselves. In the evenings our two Scotsmen retired to the local pub, where they spent the evening discussing pipe music, Home Rule for Scotland, haggis and Highland cream.

The Padre was happy. No doubt the spring entered into his blood and inspired him. Daily he came to us with a fresh ebullition of the Muse. These he read, regardless of his audience, to all and sundry—to the Colonel at orderly-room, to the Quartermaster's staff. One day, for want of better, he was found reciting his latest gem to an audience of one, an old Flemish lady who was deaf and dumb, and who had no knowledge of English !

We got to know our allies—the French inhabitants with whom we were billeted, wonderful people of that brave nation, confident in their belief in victory. Here were the patient women whose husbands were away at the war, and the young girls who shook their heads and replied "Après la guerre" and "Non compris." It was a fine old city, with high gabled houses and a town hall built by the Spaniards, with broad streets and trees on either side. Here the Germans dropped bombs, but never hurt anyone, and the inhabitants, unflurried, carried on their business. And here we spent a week, a week of peace and quiet, but of much hard work, until the Pom-

padours who had been good before became still better, until it would have been hard to find a better regiment on the whole continent of Europe.

Who ought to have known better? for we belonged to them; so who has a better right to judge ?

From Misere the Brigade marched north. We were gradually learning. This march was as much a delight as that from Maurice to the Bois de Perdrix had been a pain. We did the eighteen miles without a hitch; the men marched well and everything went swimmingly. A few fell out, but they were mostly old "sweats," and old soldiers, whose medal ribbons bore witness to the previous campaigns in which they had served.

Our regimental rule insisted that, before falling out on the march, the men had to get permission from the Medical Officer, who, if he thought fit, might direct that they be allowed to ride on waggons. Our Doctor had rather a sharp way with these, and he evidently had small belief in the graphic account of their ailments and disabilities. Nevertheless, on occasions a man would be allowed to ride on a waggon, where he would sit watching for the Medical Officer. In the event of that worthy hovering in the vicinity, the sufferer on the limber would at once assume an expression of the most intense agony until the Doctor had departed, when he would permit his features to relax, and even indulge in a wink at those less

fortunate or with better spirit than himself who trudged alongside.

Private Bloodstock had brought this accomplishment of simulating sickness, to its highest form of perfection. Long, lean, and cadaverous, with the watery eye and the rubicund nose of the habitual booze artist, he had run through the whole price-list of bodily ailments, but found the Medical Officer still unconvinced. He commenced the march in the leading section of fours in the leading company, but gradually and discreetly fell farther and farther to the rear. The end of two miles found him in rear of No. 2 Company, and by the first halt he had gravitated past the machine-gun section, and found himself in the midst of an unsympathetic and critical medical detail.

"It's a shame asking a fine soldier like yourself to walk, man Bloodstock; you ought to be on a horse at the head of the regiment," said the McSpeldron.

"Same old complaint?"

"What's it this time? Housemaid's knee or varicose veins?"

The medical sergeant was deep in the middle of a lecture on the evils of booze, as typified in the case of Private Bloodstock, when the transport officer rode up.

"What's wrong, Sergeant Bowden?"

"Private Bloodstock unable to march any farther. Wishes to fall out, and ride on a waggon."

"Where's the Medical Officer?"

"Here," answered the Doctor, from the ditch where, in company with the Quartermaster, he had been watching the episode.

"What's wrong, Private Bloodstock?"

"Sore back."

"What? Were you in the Navy?"

"No, sir; never."

"Well, how did you get a sore back? I thought the Navy had an option on sore backs? You mean sore shoulders or pain down the legs?"

"No, sir; sore back," answered Private Bloodstock stubbornly. "I've been sweating blood all morning."

"No, no, not blood. You mean red wine. This is clearing your system out; you'll be a different man at the end of the march. It's doing you a lot of good."

"No, sir; it's killing me. I'll die if I keep on" —assuming an appearance of suffering martyrdom.

"Well, don't pull a face like that; you'll frighten the mules. Let me see. Sergeant Bowden!"

"Yes, sir."

"Am I right? This man has fallen out on every march we've done so far?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, I thought so. Private Bloodstock, you'll carry on. Don't fall out again, or you'll find the experiment a trifle disastrous. Fall in with your company."

There were several Private Bloodstocks in the

regiment. It was their habit to gain the shelter of the transport waggons, where they could surreptitiously deposit their rifles on one of the limbers, and by holding on to the back-board, help themselves along on their weary way. The transport officer, rushing about like a fretful wasp, was for ever on their trail, worrying them and bringing their schemes to nought. The transport sergeant was no less antagonistic: "Come on, you cripples; no joy-riding here."

Down one side of a broad valley and up the other the Brigade steadily made its way. Everything was still and peaceful. A jay, perched on a stumpy willow, whimsically surveyed the moving column, twisting its neck to get the better look. A hare, disturbed, rose lazily from the grass and sped leisurely across an open field; only the long winding khaki snake spoke of great doings and events, as it passed on its way through the sleepy hamlets and past the waving windmills.

And somewhere on the road was the Brigadier, waiting for us to march by. Day or night it was always the same—addressing each officer and many of the men by name as we passed; silent otherwise, yet noting every detail, overlooking us as we looked up to him with mutual regard and liking. Truly we were a happy, if a large, family in the Brigade, held together to some extent by our training, to some extent by the

same common purpose; but the factor that bulked largest in our minds was the extraordinary tie of loyalty that bound us to our Brigadier, and the discipline that went with it, and which he required of us. For with discipline and loyalty you can do anything.

At the starting-place the Brigade had assembled, each unit arriving with precision and punctuality, and so, as we arrived at the end of our march, the column silently faded away. Here a company turned to right or left, their transport halted at its appointed place on the roadside. Everyone knew where to go and what to do; quietly they departed into the night, and their billets swallowed them up.

Here in a peaceful rolling country, amid avenues of poplar-trees and the gaunt frameworks of naked hop-fields, the Pompadours reposed. Not that we were idle: training still went on. Companies foot-slogged along the road; that special suicide club, the machine-gunners, practised themselves in methods of assault and defence.

A new arm of the Service had sprung up recently; we first became aware of it at Plumbois. Gradually we were undergoing a reversion to type in some of our methods, and returning to the weapons of our ancestors. Squads of men were seen in some quiet selected country field hurling missiles at one another, as though practising slow bowling. These were the bombers, our anarchists, at play

with their jam-pots. Soon they were to become one of the most efficient forces in the Army.

After pleasant days at work, and evenings spent playing football and baseball, we received our orders to march. Like children going on a Sunday-school treat, we assembled at the starting-point. Here were London busses from Charing Cross, the Waterloo Road, Pimlico, and the Elephant and Castle. The outside seats were the most popular. Through the quiet and smiling country the long train of motor caravans wound its way towards the firing-line, leaving behind it a long trail of white dust. Through villages we bumped and jolted; past farm-houses and fields, under avenues of poplars and between green hedges, we bussed it to the firing-line.

At Malmartre we left our busses and marched. A military band composed of a concertina, half a dozen mouth-organs and two biscuit-tins—the pride of the "D" Company—helped us on our way. Under the leadership of Sergeant Wells, they inspired us to noble deeds by the stirring strains they played. The Western Brigade marched at the head of the Division and the Pompadours marched at the head of the Western Brigade, and Colonel O'Shea rode at the head of the Pompadours on the big chestnut with white points. The best Colonel of the best regiment on the Western front.

It was evening when we entered the City of

Distress, and in the golden west the sun was sinking—a fiery ball of red. We marched past the cathedral and turned the corner at the famous town hall. As we took the turning and wheeled into the square, we saw the sad effect that shot and shell had wrought on the graceful lines of that historic building. Here was a city that had been a large and important centre when London was but a village—a site that centuries ago had been the meeting-place of Kings, and that now under a new-born wave of ruthlessness, after centuries of peaceful uneventful prosperity, had again sprung into the limelight amid the roar of guns and the blinding belch of shrapnel.

The town hall and the cathedral showed ample evidence of the effectiveness of artillery fire, but otherwise the town appeared very slightly damaged. Here and there a house was knocked about, or the dislodged paving-stones showed where a shell had fallen. The square was alive with people; at a hotel the guests were just sitting down to dinner; the shops were just commencing to light up; an air of busy cheerfulness permeated the community.

We left the city walls behind us in the gathering gloom and proceeded to the east. In the increasing darkness as we passed on our way, the dim forms of villages showed blurred and indistinct. Three names on the map, three Belgian villages and nothing more, but names which were

soon to be burnt into our memories and there remain as fixed points for ever — St. Michel, Boscap, and St. Jacques; and ever upward the road mounted until finally we arrived at Shelled Corner. Here on the ridge we saw the half-circle of German lights rising and falling seemingly on all sides of us. From here the country sloped down on either side of us backwards to the city we had just left, and forwards to where our own and the German lines lay facing one another in the valley beneath.

Our way lay along the ridge, and we passed several roofless buildings whose shattered walls showed grim and silent in the light of the star-shells. Here the bullets hummed and buzzed across the road, and here we picked our way amid gaping shell-craters and freshly torn earth.

We were relieving the French. For months they had held this far-flung line, holding on to their shallow wireless trenches through the dreary winter's mud and rain. A cellar, deeply buried amid the ruins of a farm-house, formed the headquarters, and from this, communication to the front line was only to be had during the day by telephone. The ground sloping downwards to the front line was destitute of communication trenches. Outside, the moon was just rising, shining on the hardy warriors of France as they formed up before marching away. Many of them spoke English and some had lived in Canada, and from them we gleaned

much information about our new line and about the habits of the enemy.

The day dawned bright and the country was soon bathed in sunshine. We now had an opportunity of seeing what manner of place we were in. It was a land bare and bleak, with few houses and with fewer signs of population than the smiling pastures we had left. Yet it was by no means unpleasant. Across the valley, and well behind the German lines, a village with white walls and red roofs lay straggling along a road. Over in the German lines a balloon hung motionless, and soon we were to know the reason of its presence. A long-drawn shriek, quickly rising in a swift crescendo, and a shell dropped in the field some forty yards from us. Major Meldrum and Captain Wallace and the Adjutant quickly sought cover. That, however, did not satisfy the observers from the balloon. Three more shells followed the first in rapid succession; they were big ones, bursting with a rattling jar and a cloud of black smoke. Then followed a flight of "whizz-bangs," that brought down the bricks and scattered splinters broadcast. The telephone bell rang. "A" Company in the front line were catching it also; already they had had several casualties.

We had been shelled frequently at Plumbois and at the Bois de Perdrix, but there they were only "pip-squeaks" and "whizz-bangs," which nobody paid much attention to. Here, however,

it was different, and there was something compelling in the shattering roar of the high explosive. We stayed in our cellar and hoped that if a shell alighted on the roof, the layers of sandbag and brick would be strong enough to sustain the impact. Presently the bombardment quieted down and we crept out. This time, however, we kept low behind our ruined walls; for we had had our lesson: that balloon, hanging in the sky to the east, was watching every movement.

Outside, the sentry in the yard yawned and stretched himself. He alone had remained above ground during the firing, although two shells had landed in the yard, and splinters had fallen all round him. The Roman sentinel at Pompeii was not braver or more contemptuous of danger than are our sentries of to-day. At cross-roads, with shrapnel bursting overhead, or at the gateways of farm buildings rocking beneath the blows of high explosive, they stand calmly and apparently indifferent, the air heavy with the reek of poisonous gas, and splinters of shell and broken brick falling all around.

The whole of our front line received a dusting. The reason was not hard to find. The French during the day had lain quietly in their dugouts, appearing as seldom as was possible. We, however, seemed to be always on the move, courting disaster by so doing; for ever the old balloon soared aloft in the sky and sent its messages to

the waiting artillery, who were not slow to take its toll of us. In "A" Company Lieutenant Ball was twice buried in the ruins of the parapet only to rise again and shake himself and carry on. On the right Captain Wales had a bullet through his cap as a gentle reminder to keep his head down, and Allonby, of the same company, was wakened by a whiz-bang which suddenly invaded his dugout, but failed entirely to explode. Twenty-five casualties in all was the result of our first day's experience, and the French had had two in the last three weeks; certainly their methods of warfare had something to recommend them!

Late that night the Padre and the Doctor were enjoying a stroll. The wounded had all been cleared, and the opportunity appeared fitting to gain a knowledge of the country. Together they wandered back from the firing-lines and found themselves opposite a farm-house some three miles in rear.

"I'll lead you back across country by the stars if you like, Doctor," suggested the Padre, who had been reading some light astronomical literature in a popular journal in his spare moments.

The sky overhead was in places obscured by patches of drifting cloud, and the Medical Officer appeared sceptical.

"Where's the Pole-star?"

"I can't quite make out, as the Great Bear seems to be hidden in a cloud, but that must be

Andromeda over there; at this season of the year it is just to the east of the Pole-star. Those stars up there must be part of Cassiopeia; it is supposed to look like a W."

"Well, whoever said it was a W must have been drinking; it looks more like a dice-box," objected the Medical Officer. "What are those three things down there?"—pointing to three stars low down on the horizon.

"Let me see: those must be Perseus," explained the man of God a trifle uncertainly. "That decides it: those stars are all in the north-east of the heavens at this season, so we're all right. Let us proceed."

They proceeded some distance in silence, when the Medical Officer again became suspicious.

"But, Padre, we're going downhill. Now, our quarters are somewhere on the top of the ridge, so by all the rules of the game we ought to go up."

"Well, but look at Andromeda."

"Andromeda be hanged! Do you know that I've been clearing wounded since seven o'clock, and it's now about 2 a.m. Here's a sentry; we'll ask him."

The sentry didn't in the least know his location on the map—in fact, sentries very seldom seem to do so; but just down the road at the first farm a company was billeted, and it would be possible to ask the officer. The Doctor joyfully, and the Padre reluctantly, repaired thither in search of

information. A company officer, roused from sleep in the farmer's bedroom, produced a map and showed where their wanderings, and the Parson's astronomical knowledge, had brought them.

"Why, you're going just in the wrong direction; another mile or two would have landed you in the city."

"There you are, Padre. The solar system, or whatever you call it, has gone back on you."

"I wonder if I can have mistaken Arcturus?"

"Never mind what you have mistaken; I've got the way now: first to the right and second to the left, and then across the flat. Thank you so much; sorry to have disturbed you."

The two non-combatants were again out on the road. Passing through a sleeping village, they mounted the road in silence.

"Halte la!" suddenly rang out from the hedge-side.

The Padre and the Medical Officer "halted la" as directed and awaited developments.

"Qui vive?"

"Help! it's a French sentry," muttered the Medical Officer. "Say something, Padre, for Heaven's sake, or he'll start shooting."

"Qui vive?" came the challenge, more peremptorily than before.

"Amies Canadiennes," responded the man of God in husky tones.

"You're a liar, Padre; we're not women," remarked the Doctor.

In any case, the answer apparently allayed the suspicions of the sentry, for he called something in the darkness. Presently two other forms appeared out of the night and advanced towards the two wanderers.

One of the two, evidently a non-commissioned officer, commenced a lengthy harangue, in which the word "mot" occurred at frequent intervals.

"I have it," said the Medical Officer. "He wants the word—the password. Try him with the Word of God; it's all we've got."

Both the Parson and the Doctor denied any knowledge of the word, so nothing remained but to retrace their footsteps towards the village they had recently quitted in charge of an escort.

"We'll probably be shot at dawn," the Doctor suggested. "I hope the next time you want to practise astronomy you'll take one of the bugle-boys out with you and leave me at home."

Down the road they tramped, the two Gallic warriors with yard-long convincing bayonets poking in the small of their back. Opposite the door of one of the houses they paused, and one of the guards knocked. After a brief delay they were admitted. Inside was a room; the floor formed the couch of several French soldiers asleep; at a table a non-commissioned officer was writing by the light of a single candle. The guard rapidly

stated his case, to which the non-commissioned officer listened attentively. Presently he turned to the two prisoners and asked in English:

"Who are you?"

"Canadian officers," replied the Padre, adding ingratiatingly: "Very sorry to disturb you, but these gentlemen here with the bayonets were so very insistent."

"What regiment?"

"The Pompadours."

The *sous-officier* proceeded to examine the reverend gentleman's badges, but as these were all of the iron-cross variety, he gained little information—they appeared, in fact, to irritate him. The Medical Officer, in a private's British "warm" and a Balaclava helmet, carried no external badges of information.

"Take off your coat."

The Doctor complied, quite forgetting that in his hurry of bandaging up the wounded he had forgotten to put on his tunic. The French N.C.O. appeared still more suspicious, giving an order to the two guards, who at once assumed a position on either side of the prisoners. He then left the room.

"Undoubtedly we shall be shot," remarked the Doctor. "How's your pulse, Padre?"

Presently the *sous-officier* returned with his Commanding Officer, who courteously commenced to question the prisoners. Through the inter-

mediary of the *sous-officier* he demanded their rank, name, and occupation, and appeared satisfied with his investigation. Finally he told them the watchword, and bidding them " Au revoir," wished them " Bon chance." Out on the road the Padre and the Doctor resumed their interrupted stroll. Up the road they met the sentry, to whom they joyfully imparted the magic word, coupled with a small legacy for the provision of red wine.

The two wanderers parted from their guards with mutual feelings of regret, and, I trust, respect.

They had gone some distance without a word being spoken on either side. Suddenly the Medical Officer broke the silence:

" What's that star over there, Padre ?"

" That, I think, must be the star in the east; if you're a wise man, you'll seek it and go to bed," answered the man of God.

A week we spent on the ridge—a week of shelling and sacrifice. Always in the east the balloon hung, and whenever we showed, we lost men. Undoubtedly it was no health resort, but though we remained quietly dodging the shells like rabbits in a hedgerow, others were more busy. Overhead, aeroplanes soared aloft like fretful midges. For the most part when two aeroplanes from opposite sides met, they studiously cut one another, but occasionally they so far forgot their society manners as to make an attack. Then the infantry, bored with inaction in the front-line trench, had a short

fleeting spell of excitement while the hostile planes circled round one another like eagles fighting for an opening. Occasionally one was brought down, and then, if it was a German, a cheer would travel down the trench for miles and miles, until the enemy, enraged at our success, would open up rapid rifle-fire to remind us to keep our heads down and not to gloat over-much.

The artillery also appeared to have a secret compact to ignore one another, and confined their efforts to making things uncomfortable for the infantry in the front line. Ours took an unholy joy in shelling the German trench, until the Hun was forced to retaliate. Then as the sandbags collapsed and fell tumbling upon us, and the parapet gradually disappeared in the deafening report of high explosives and the rain of flying fragments, we strafed the gunners, and invented new insults to hurl at them the next time our rest billets took us in the neighbourhood of their batteries.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CITY OF DISTRESS

For two days we had been in reserve billets. In the afternoons we had ridden down to the city, and according to our various tastes amused ourselves. "It sure is a live town," remarked Sergeant Duck Roberts, and he certainly had some grounds on which to base his contention. The inhabitants, who had departed at the time of the great battle, had, many of them, returned. Indifferent to shell-fire, they pursued their various vocations, and I have little doubt derived a lucrative return from their open-handed allies.

There were points of interest in the city with its moat and battlements, its houses faced with timber, and the venerable churches. We spent the afternoon in visiting our friends in the battalions quartered there, and dined at the Hotel au Pigeon.

It was four in the afternoon, and all was still and peaceful. Outside, the men lay basking in the April sunshine or indulging in games of chance and skill. Round the end of the farm building half a dozen men were kicking a

football about. A game of quoits, played with horseshoes, absorbed the interest of another quartette. On the ground a group was gathered round the royal and ancient game of crown and anchor. Here and there sundry tattered warriors were repairing the rents in their garments caused by barbed wire, while others stripped to the waist conducted operations of engrossing interest and of a nature reminiscent of the monkey-house at the Zoo! Even that strict martinet, the sergeant-major, had relinquished somewhat of his habitual sternness, and permitted his dorsal muscles for the time being to relax, as he and the signalling sergeant strolled backwards and forwards in front of the headquarters of the Pompadours.

Inside, the officers employed the idle afternoon according to their various tastes: the Colonel pursued a scheme of defence; Major Meldrum busied himself with the war diary, and the Adjutant compiled a nominal roll; it was, he said, the twentieth since the formation of the regiment, and showed no signs of being more correct than its predecessors. In a corner, stretched on his blankets, the Medical Officer snored noisily and ungracefully.

"Grosvenor, would you mind throwing a boot at the Medical Officer; he's disturbing my train of thought," the Major requested.

The Adjutant complied with his request. It was a good shot, and the snoring ceased.

"We don't mind you sleeping, Pills, but please don't make such a noise about it," remarked the Major.

The Medical Officer yawned and, rising, left the room.

The Bosches suddenly appeared to have become active, and to be concentrating their attention on the neighbouring village of St. Jacques.

As the Medical Officer walked round the corner of the farm buildings the football game had ceased, and the men were watching the bombardment. Certainly it was an exacerbation of spite. Big crumps were falling round the church, and roofs were being lifted, and walls tottered in a cloud of black smoke and brick-dust. The Padre once said there was something noble about a bombardment. It may be awe-inspiring—that I am prepared to admit—but its nobility I fail to see. The card games ceased and their devotees congregated with the footballers to see the fun. Not much fun in seeing a village gradually wiped off the map, as it went up in the air and smoke, and fell crumbling in ruins. The church steeple went, flattened by a direct hit, and already two houses were burning. Across the fields some men and women were running; they were part of the civilian population—the rats leaving the sinking ship. All honour to them; they had stayed by their firesides up to the last moment, hoping against hope that their homes might be spared, and now

with a few personal effects they went their way blown as straws before the devastation that was like to destroy their all. As they fled, puffs of smoke appeared above them in the sky. Two of them, a man and a woman, paused in their flight; they seemed to crumple and collapse, shutting up as does a footrule: they were the firstfruits of the German shrapnel. The woman rose and staggered on—evidently she was grievously stricken; the peasant lay where he fell. Other figures detached themselves from the buildings or appeared over the crest of the hill above it; some were running, others seemed scarce able to walk. As they approached, we recognized they were not civilians: their dusky faces and uniforms were those of the French colonial troops. They came to us across the fields, their faces blue beneath their tan, and breathing hard as though from running. Most of them were wounded, and gasping; struggling for breath, they tried to tell us, in a language which our French scholars could not understand, of some terror that lay behind them.

"Cyanosis," said the Medical Officer, as with a puzzled expression he surveyed their livid countenances; "but how the Hades—— Come inside." He led the way into the spacious cellar that formed the regimental dressing-station, while we outside awaited further developments. Still the hail of destruction fell amid the stricken village, threatening it with ultimate ruin. To our right

the Brigade Headquarters were on fire, the thatched roof burning merrily and the sparks driving toward us, borne on the light east wind. Something else came to us carried also by the evening breeze. At first a faint, sour pungency, that dried our mouths and set us coughing. Over there to the north-east something was happening, something that we gained a slight suspicion of, from the terror-stricken brown faces of the swarthy soldiers of France, who still continued to arrive in twos and threes.

Our artillery was not idle; first one battery and then another opened up, barking back merrily, and answering shot for shot. With a rattle and clash a limber hammered up the road, the horses stretched to a gallop, their drivers bending low and their sergeants urging them on, all heedless of the shrapnel bursting overhead.

"By God, they're down!" shouted Private McMutchkin as the off wheeler was seen to stumble, and almost to fall. "No, he's saved it, good lad!" as the driver hauled the horse to its feet. Another and another limber followed; this was the food for the guns, and loudly they clamoured for it, calling for more and yet more again. Orderlies rattled along the road on motor-cycles, bearing messages through the tornado of flying metal, while here and there signallers, with fine contempt of danger, mended the broken telephone wires.

In the clamour of destruction, amid the wild shriek of the flying shell and the roar of guns, a new sound mingled; it was the sharp rattle of rifle-fire.

The telephone bell buzzed industriously. Then came the order, "The Pompadours will stand to." With our equipment on, we stood waiting, watching the racing limbers, the flying cyclists, and the wounded black men who still staggered by. The rifle-fire had increased to a continuous patter, and now the shells began to search for our farm-house. Large ones roared overhead, flying on a more distant journey, to fall with a crumping thud on the city behind us. Now the something which had come to us before was wafted to us again, bringing the tears to our eyes, gripping us by the throat, and setting us catching our breaths. And with it came a Highlander, one of our own Canadians, bleeding from a wound in the shoulder, pale and gasping. Never did the bearer of the fiery cross carry tidings so urgent. "The Germans are attacking; they're all over the place; we're being suffocated by gas."

"Take him away," said the Colonel, as cool as if on church parade, to the Medical Officer. "Let him lie down."

One after another the companies reported all present and correct, and received their orders—to assemble at a certain cross-roads on the ridge.

And now there arrived a sergeant of artillery. A limber was ditched down the road: could we supply the men to carry ammunition to X Battery, who were crying for more ?

Captain Grosvenor asked for permission to go, and called for volunteers.

The medical detail, being used to carrying things, stepped forward as one man. "I want men, not camp-followers," declared Grosvenor. This was almost more than the Medical Officer could stand; with difficulty he remained silent under the insult to his gallant band of body-snatchers, but it strained him to bursting-point.

"Sorry for being rude, Pills," said the Adjutant, and was off with fifty men to carry the sore-needed supplies to the hungering battery.

Out upon the high-road the Adjutant and his party went to where the fallen limber stuck, hanging over the ditch. Then onwards up the hill, each man with two precious mouthfuls for the hungry guns. Through the tottering village, where brick walls bent and bulged, falling before the storm, and where first one and then another of this strange ration-party fell wounded in his tracks. Upwards to the battery, where anxious officers looked round, waiting for the shell for which they yearned, and sweating gunners swore at their inaction. Just as the Adjutant and his band, bearing their precious burdens, arrived, the Germans appeared, swarming out of a wood.

It was a target to dream of after a full mess dinner—a target that occurs once in the lifetime of one in a million gunners. Bursting their shrapnel at the muzzle of their guns, the artillery blew the Germans back into the wood, and the advancing grey swarm melted away as snow in sunshine.

Down in Malmartre events were shaping themselves rapidly. Thither the transport had betaken itself, and with it the Quartermaster's store, when the shelling round the north part of the City of Distress became so violent, that it was not possible to remain longer. Quietly, and without undue haste, they made their exit, and found a new site for their energies just west of the cross-roads at Malmartre. During this orderly removal they were much incommoded by a stream of fugitives hurrying from the doomed city. On horse and on foot, in every conceivable type of conveyance, they hastened onward, their faces to the west. The way was crowded by the hastening throng, as is the high-road to Epsom on Derby Day; yet here there was the double force—the attraction of life in front and the destruction of death behind —driving them on their way: *vis a fronte* and *a tergo*, and the crowd hurried down the one main artery, scarce pausing to look to right or left, like scared corpuscles in an over-heated bloodstream.

The Paymaster and the Quartermaster, standing

at the shop-door of the new Quartermaster's store, surveyed the moving mob. There were women and children, snatched suddenly from their homes where all their lives had been spent, as plants suddenly torn up by the roots. Some still wore the wooden shoes of their housework, so hastily had the desire to leave come upon them; others arrayed in their Sunday best, of musty black, with artificial blooms nodding in their hats, passed by. Here a stalwart peasant-woman—her skirt looped up to show a pair of passionless thick ankles, her black bonnet with its bobbing jet adornment tilted rakishly above her broad, perspiring face—paused in her onward passage to cuff the handiest ear of her dragging offspring, who, with the apparent heedlessness of childhood, hung back, watching the crowd and listening to the guns, all unconcernedly and with interest. Another woman, with an infant lying half buried beneath the load of a well-packed perambulator, paused to wait on her two small girls who had straggled somewhat in the rear. One couldn't help wondering how often this anxious mother had paused already since leaving home, retarded by the two small maids who dawdled behind her. They also were dressed to kill, or to be killed—what matter, since we are all as good as dead until the war is over?—but their finery was sadly spoiled by the dust and ruin of the road. A battery of French artillery, the murderous *soixante-quinze*, came

trotting through the village, scattering the fugitives to right and left, like hens in front of a motor. The smaller of the two small maidens turned to look and fell sprawling; her sister, still clutching her hand, bent over her, and tried to pull her away from beneath the iron-shod hoofs that thundered down on her. Above the rattle and the jingling rang the shrill screams of the mother. Private Beattie of the Pompadours ran in, grabbing the two small mites in either hand as the French drivers brought their horses to a standstill, and the Quartermaster took possession of the perambulator, which he pulled on to the sidewalk.

"See this lady through the village," said the Quartermaster to Private Beattie.

In the wake of the French seventy-fives followed more refugees: a youth, not yet of military age, guiding by a rope a dog team four abreast, straining in front of a soap-box on wheels, on which sat an aged woman, her knees drawn up beneath her chin, her umbrella grasped in black cotton gloves, her funereal bonnet nodding as her precarious chariot swayed from side to side. Another ancient dame passed on her way seated in a ramshackle perambulator. A wizened, toothless return to second childishness.

There were two-wheeled rigs with tilts, designed for two, but now for the first time found to have a carrying capacity for six or seven; wheelbarrows,

carts packed with humanity, dragged behind enormous, steady, slow Flemish horses which answered to the touch of the single-string rein. There were cabs and victorias, piled high with household goods. In one, a fat citizen, probably a shopkeeper, rolled by smoking a cigar and embracing a marble clock, as he sat surrounded by his family. A Canadian limber came along. Tied behind, was an old lady in a crazy four-wheeled cart, like a canoe dragging in the wake of the *Mauretania*. The courteous driver of the limber, forcing his team through the surrounding hubbub, was quite oblivious to the wails of distress emanating from his tiny consort. He was giving the old lady a lift—that was enough; and now, amid the noise and tumult, turned a deaf ear to the squeals and lamentations that each fresh jolt and swerve, which threatened to precipitate her on the pavement, wrung from the terrified antiquity tied on to his tail-board.

Another old lady seated in a wheelbarrow, pushed by a bulky peasant, was borne past uncomplaining, her legs dangling grotesquely to either side, with a most unmatronly display of limb, encased in grey socks and elastic-sided boots.

Amid the jostling push were French colonial troops, many of them wounded and many still struggling for the breath denied them by the poisonous gas; French ambulances bearing their

cargo of sufferers : all with one common object and one single goal in view, they ran, limped, walked, and staggered past the waiting Canadian soldiers.

Then, to add to the confusion, the German shells commenced to fall around the village, and the jostling crowd, hurrying through, broke into an ungainly run, and a shell, falling square, landed in a house with a flush hit. The Paymaster went across the street to see if anyone was hurt. In the eating-room a family party was assembled, still at the table when death came to them. The father fallen forward on the table, his face buried in his arms, appeared to sleep; the mother, sitting back in her chair, gazed in front of her with fixed, unwinking stare; and in a high chair, leaning sideways on the wooden tray in front of him, was a small boy—a tiny child with flaxen hair, wet and dabbled in blood, his hand still clutching a now useless spoon, and his toys lying beside him on the floor. This, my friends, is the effect of shell-fire.

The companies had all departed in the oncoming night, leaving the Colonel and the Medical Officer and a few stretcher-bearers and signallers beside the farm-house.

" Well, Doctor, it's time we were off," remarked the O.C. as he threw away his cigarette. " We'll overtake the companies near the cross-roads."

The headquarter units emulated the brave old Duke of York and marched towards the top of

the hill. At times they encountered stragglers, for the most part French native troops who, in broken French and by the aid of gestures, gave them to understand that all was lost and the Germans were upon them. A few Highlanders there were too, either gassed or wounded; they were more complacent than their dusky allies, and the information they brought that the Germans were in on the left, but that the Highland brigade were breaking the first shock of the attack, was more reassuring. Moreover, the Colonel didn't seem to be flurried, and the Medical Officer was too ignorant of military matters to realize the seriousness of the position, so the non-combatant details trudged along in a state of happy expectation.

They skirted the fiery furnace that had been brigade battle headquarters, and as they rejoined the road on the windward side, Captain Ainslie waved to them from the roadside.

"Hot times, Ainslie," shouted the Colonel. "How's the General?"

"He's moved into the barn as temporary headquarters."

A burst of shrapnel swept the road, but nobody was hit. The Colonel gave the order to open out, and in single flight, like so many ducks, the details arrived at the cross-roads.

By this time things had quieted down considerably; bursts of rifle-fire still continued at

short intervals, but the big-gun fire seemed to be concentrated farther back, probably on the roads. Rapidly the Colonel told us, to the best of his knowledge, what had happened. On our left the French division of coloured troops had been gassed by the Bosches. Confronted by a slow-moving green cloud that crept towards them in billows as an oncoming tide, they believed themselves suddenly attacked by some new and ruthless type of devil. Amid the havoc of their shot-torn trenches, gasping for breath in the suffocating blast of this relentless green monster, with their officers down, they had fallen back. By the gap thus formed our left flank had been exposed, and now it was the task of the Pompadours, along with the others, to attempt to fill in the blank.

As we moved along the ridge to take up our position, the Germans kindly showed us their new position by sending up the customary star-shells. They certainly had advanced quite a respectable distance, and were not only on the top of the ridge to our left, but lapping over on the farther side.

"I wonder what they're waiting for? Why don't they go on and take the city?" remarked Major Meldrum, who now joined us.

"Yes; there's only a few transport lines and some telephone-wires to hold them up," the Colonel admitted. "Anyhow, now we can see exactly where they are."

The Major had arrived, brimful of intelligence, from the battalion which was to form our left. The new headquarters, just beyond Shattered Shelters, proved to be a wonderfully preserved farm dwelling, with our new line some three hundred yards in front. Three companies proceeded to dig themselves in; the fourth had been left in a defended locality on the top of the ridge.

While the companies scraped and burrowed like fox-terriers round a rat-hole, a wonderful thing happened.

A low rumble, coming from our rear, gradually became disintegrated into a well-known variety of sounds.

Clattering and jingling, swearing and perspiring, the transport arrived at Shattered Shelters. That famous sleuth-hound, the transport officer, with his unerring sense of smell, had nosed us out! What his transport went through to get to us on that occasion, and on many others, was best shown by the broken limbers and dead horses that strewed the roads he passed along. Yet such was his knowledge of by-roads, or his accuracy at judging the distance of the shelling, or possibly just his damned luck, he came through night after night and lost neither horse nor man.

The transport driver's life at best of times is but a sordid existence. They splash round amid a sea of mud and water, feeding their wet and shivering teams. They get kicked by mules and

bitten by unappreciative remounts. They go to bed at dawn and rise two minutes after to commence a new day; they are chaffed by the men in the companies, who accuse them of trying to avoid the firing-line; they are sworn at by road policemen, rebuked by company officers, accused of stealing by the ordinary rank and file, and damned effectively, and on general principles, by the regiment as a whole. Their feet are always wet; the harness, cracking from want of sufficient dubbin, tears and wounds their numbed and frozen fingers. No wonder they become a trifle unapproachable and misanthropic, and develop into past pluperfect grand masters of the art of light and breezy badinage. During a battle, held up for long hours near a cross-road recently peppered by the Huns' artillery, and liable to be plastered again at any minute; when the roads are blocked by reinforcements; when ambulance-waggons sway bulkily down the centre of the fairway; when panting, steaming ammunition limbers demand priority; when motor-cycles ram their explosive forms into their midst ; when shell-holes gape in the causeway; when shattered equine corpses, with legs stretched heavenwards, send shudders through their steeds; when houses blaze alongside and burning timbers flare across the road; when rifle bullets hum and shrapnel bursts overhead—their occupation is certainly not one to covet. Yet so well were we, in the Pompadours, served by our

"first line" that even during our worst moments, it was never necessary to open an iron ration for want of our ordinary meals.

"All that night we watched the streamers
Steal across the northern sky."

By daylight much had been done, and our two companies had some sort of shelter. Certainly it was not much to boast about; in one place an old trench had been adapted and improved, but for the most part our only protection lay in the hastily dug rabbit scrapes, which had been scratched during the hours of darkness. In front of these was a field of fire of some three hundred yards which ought to have made good shooting, and somewhere, in the hedges and trees over there, lurked the Bosches. His move next: we wonder what it will be? Overhead fly the planes: "Ours or theirs?" Mostly they seem to be hostile. One hangs motionless directly over us, no doubt summing up the situation, boding us little good in the hours to come.

News begins to filter in. The Canadian Caledonians and the Assiniboias have made a charge. During the night, when we were digging in, they were counter-attacking the enemy. We hear of guns lost and recaptured, of good work in the wood and many dead Germans. Of our own casualties so far, nothing; we will hear soon enough. On our right the Jocks are still in their trenches,

where they broke the left of the German attack last night; on our left, the Eastern Brigade is linking up. So far our own casualties have been slight—two or three bullet wounds and three men killed by shrapnel. It is the lull before the storm. Meantime we dig in and make the best of things. The morning passes uneventfully: bursts of rifle-fire at intervals on our left, over there in the wood. There is little shelling on our front, but in the city they must be having a hot time. High over our heads we hear the big shells roaring on their way, to fall far behind us amid the thick clustered buildings. There is something conclusive and emphatic about the thud of a large shell as it hammers its way home. A thundering bang that once for all ends all argument. It's a short life and a busy one, born in an explosion, and terminating in a crack of doom.

Everyone was merry and bright. The Germans had broken through; we didn't know how far they had gone, and, for all we knew, might by now be well on the road to Calais! But, on our part, we were all right, and every hour made our trenches stronger.

A few wounded Turcos were found in dugouts; these were brought in and had their hurts dressed. Very philosophic they were, too, as they lay on the blood-stained straw of the dressing-station, smoking our ration cigarettes with Oriental dignity

and stoicism. So passed the morning. In the afternoon we had our first disaster. We could not have had a greater.

The Colonel, anxious to ascertain as accurately as possible the position of the enemy on our immediate front, went out with Major Meldrum and our Buonaparte of Engineers, Lieutenant Macpherson. From the trench they advanced some three hundred yards to where a ruined *estaminet* offered shelter and an opportunity for observing. On looking through the sashless back window, they found the ground immediately behind alive with the enemy. Germans lined the hedge stretching away on either side of them. The only thing to be done was to get out as quickly as possible. Hurrying from the building, a fusillade of rifle-shots greeted them from the hedge on either side, and the Colonel fell mortally wounded in a shell-hole. From our first beginning he had looked after the battalion with watchful care. Our best interests he had ever at heart, and all his thoughts were for the Pompadours. During the early days of our apprenticeship in Canada and England, he had handled us gently and skilfully as we gradually felt the bit.

It was like some slow, sweet evolution, the systematic formation of our character as a battalion. Gathered from the mountains, forests, the rivers, and the seashore, he found us, the integral portions

collected from several different units, and patiently and with infinite pains he welded us into shape. The command of the battalion was now in the hands of Major Meldrum, and no better opportunity could have been selected for the exercise of his tireless zeal and initiative.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROAR OF BATTLE

It was nightfall before the Colonel could be brought in. For five hours he had lain in the muddy bottom of a shell-hole within fifty paces of the Germans, receiving such rude care as it was possible to give him, silent and uncomplaining. He left us in the morning, departing from Battalion Headquarters for the last time to go on a longer journey.

The Major, Captain Grosvenor, and the Medical Officer had lain down for a few minutes just before the dawn. The time, to be exact, was precisely 4 a.m. when the ball opened—the long-drawn, ceaseless roar of a continuous bombardment. The headquarters staff, gathered outside the low farm buildings, found a precarious shelter, praying that that particular spot might be unmarked on the German artillery maps; if not, it was merely a matter of time when their crazy shelter would go up in smoke as the farms around them were already doing. One after another the German guns found the neighbouring houses; each in succession was plastered and deleted from the landscape! Two

hundred yards along the road, Shattered Shelters was gradually sliding into the valley amid a débris of falling rafters, tiles, and plaster. All round the headquarters brass-nosed monsters were falling with thunderous impact, throwing the soil broadcast as they rent their craters in earth. The clamour was uninterrupted and incessant. Aloft the aeroplanes, silent and watchful as vultures, floated like gigantic birds of ill-omen, dropping their signal lights. The Germans had surely a pretty wit when they called them doves! Perhaps they were thinking of Noah, who, after all, was responsible for the first successful air reconnaissance. . . .

Our trenches were suffering badly; from time to time news came to us of casualties: Captain Hardwick was already down, badly hit; several men were wounded. And now the German artillery lifted; down below us on the lower slopes and round the devoted village of St. Jacques they were getting it hot. The cross-roads and the main roads suffered most, for there the tornado of flying iron and shrapnel was at its height. And now, amid the loud roar of artillery-fire, came the persistent patter of the rifles and machine-guns, and insidiously there swept upon us the yellow crawling pestilential haze that dried our throats and parched our mouths, and caused our very souls to shrivel. The gas floated down among us.

In the front line the three companies waited

patiently for their turn to come. The German aeroplanes had done their work effectively, for already the guns had found out our trenches with some success. Just below us, on the forward slope of the ridge, the Jocks were catching it badly. With their trenches blown to pieces, suffocated by the gas and torn with shrapnel, they still held on. Small parties of wounded struggled back to the dressing-station; but still the rest remained, driving back the German infantry who strove to storm their trenches.

As the morning wore on, the Germans launched more attacks; more gas and more shells; but the men in the trenches on our right were of a race as stubborn as their own, and fell back slowly, fighting all the way.

Suddenly the hedge that fronted the Pompadours' trench across three hundred yards of open was alive with grey-blue figures.

"Here they come!" shouted Major Hill. "Rapid independent! Give them hell!"

Across the open space the attack came, not in dense masses as we had been led to expect, but line on line, like waves in an advancing flood. No wild charge of cheering warriors, and without the glorious rush of battle, they came on methodically and silently, as men with a duty to be performed in which they took small delight. It was a magnificent example of their discipline.

Every man had his greatcoat rolled up; we saw

their water-bottles and their haversacks hanging as if on parade. Across the fields they stumbled forward, running clumsily with their fat legs and ridiculous boots. And behind each line we saw their officers urging them on. From the trench our rifles cracked and machine-guns spat; before the hail of bullets the Germans fell. Soon the field was spotted with fallen figures, some lying still, others trying to crawl away. But still they came on. Now we could see their features and count the buttons on their tunics as they lumbered forward. Down the road towards our lines, blowing what, presumably, was the charge, came a German bugler. A platoon of the Pompadours must have hit the life out of him with a splash of rifle-bullets. Now the wave lapped against the edge of our trench. Suddenly a fat German, with bulging eyes, recognizing death staring at him across the mud-bank, turned to fly. He got his attack of cold feet too late. A bullet caught him on the buckle of his waistbelt, causing his equipment to fly apart as it passed onwards on its way. A huge red-headed warrior, his mouth open and breathing hard from running, got it square between the eyebrows; the force of the rush carried him onward to fall against the parapet, where he lay, the back blown out of his head and with a look of mild surprise upon his face. One or two rushed the parapet, but they were not fighters, and fell like sheep on the points of our bayonets.

The attack had failed for the moment, but at any time it might be renewed.

At headquarters the Major waited for news. The signal-wires were cut; wiremen, sent out to repair them, never returned. Orderlies despatched with messages turned up days after in base hospitals badly wounded, or died before delivering their missives. The thatched roof of the orderly-room was burning; the end of the low house, hit by a salvo, tottered and fell with a crash, and the Major and the Adjutant moved into the medical dressing-room in search of healthier quarters. The attack on our immediate front had failed for the moment, but to the right the Highlanders, after two days' furious fighting, were gradually being driven back. Outside the building the bullets pattered on the walls like hail. On the other side, the Germans in a wood to our left had turned a machine-gun on the dressing-station door, and repeated flights of bullets flicked inside, knocking the plaster from the walls, and rattled on the brick floor. The Major was writing a report of the situation, pausing from time to time to ask the Adjutant, who, sheltering behind the side of the window, gazed into the valley below, if there was any sign of reinforcements.

From the front line came a message from Major Hill: "Evening's infantry attack repulsed. We are now being shelled heavily. Our casualties heavy. We are holding on."

The room was filled with dying and badly wounded men; trampled straw and dirty dressings lay about in pools of blood. The air, rank with the fumes of gas, was thick with the dust of flying plaster and broken brick, and stifling with the smoke from the burning thatch.

So much for the pomp and panoply of war. In the mess of modern warfare there are few reminders of the majesty of ancient days, except the spirit of the men. In the dressing-station the mess was at its worst, and yet in the stench of that foul atmosphere, reeking with a host of horrors, with the earth trembling and the roar of battle all around, the wounded, lying with the dead, made no complaint.

"Any sign of reinforcements, Grosvenor?" asked the Major. He and the Adjutant were splendid. Two nights of sleepless vigilance had worn new lines on their faces; they were dirty and unshaven, but still preserved their air of cheerful confidence. The Adjutant, watching the high-road leading up from the city, and seeing no sign of help, answered in the negative. The Medical Officer, remembering a nursery story—it is strange how these things come to one—murmured:

"Sister Ann, Sister Ann, do you see anybody coming?"

In the front line things were rapidly going from bad to worse. The German artillery had again

taken up the tune, pounding the flimsy earthwork and bringing death to its occupants. Again the storm lifted, and again the blue-grey uniforms swarmed across the intervening ground to meet the thin but waiting line of khaki.

A wounded Pompadour arrived at headquarters, blood streaming from a cut on his forehead. "The Germans are in our trenches." As he delivered the message, the machine-gun, waiting in the wood, caught him on its whirring blast and crumpled him up on the threshold. Crash! A shell hit the outside wall with thundering impact. Outside, remnants of the Pompadours and Highlanders were retiring, taking what cover they could, loading magazines and firing coolly and carefully.

The wounded were got out, as many as could limp and hobble; others were hastily borne away on stretchers; the remainder, who were dying, were placed in dugouts so as to escape the worse death from burning.

The Pompadours took up a new line, all that was left of them. The Adjutant, as he and the Major moved back along the ridge, remarked: "This is my aunt's birthday. I wonder how the old lady's spending it?"

"I hope more peacefully than we are," replied the Major. "Look at the Doctor."

The gentleman in question was executing a strategic retrograde movement across the fields,

taking advantage of every bit of cover that appeared convenient in the shape of hedges and dead ground. With him went his stretcher-bearers, sluggishly meandering across country. The fields across which they struggled were heavily shelled, but luck was with the medical profession, and the party disappeared finally with a funereal dignity behind some buildings.

The remaining company of the regiment, perched in solitary magnificence in their fortified position on the ridge, had also not had things all their own way. At the beginning of the fuss they mustered a fighting strength of close on two hundred. As with the other companies, they suffered from an alternation of shelling and infantry attacks, until, with scarce two dozen left and all their officers gone, the shattered remnant fell back and joined the ranks of the battalion on the right. Here were the men of the plains, the farmers from the wheatlands, gallantly maintaining themselves against the various types of German frightfulness that seethed on every side of them. The Prairie Rifles stuck to their ground these days and yielded not an inch.

By this time the much-needed reinforcements were coming up. The Quartermaster, standing in the doorway of his store on the main street at Malmartre, saw regiment after regiment swing by.

Blocked by congested traffic, a regiment halted, and the Quartermaster recognized by their bonnets

that they were brother Scots. The Glasgow Highlanders! The Quartermaster strolled forward.

"Which battalion?" he asked a youthful subaltern.

"The second. We're going on up there to reinforce." He pointed in a direction beyond the city. "We make a counter-attack at 3 p.m. You'd better come and watch us."

The Quartermaster regretted that a previous engagement with the transport forbade him; he also was going that way, but it would be later in the evening.

Then there were battalions of Indian troops. Tall, turbaned, coloured warriors, fine-featured, and with eyes like sheepdogs. They wore their shirt-tails flapping in the breeze as they stalked forward with impressive dignity. Then came small, squat soldiers, bustling forward, their eyes glistening in anticipation, and their faces below their broad-brimmed hats reminding the Quartermaster of our own Siwash Indians. These were the Gurkhas. Licking their lips in anticipation, they hustled past, loosening their *kukris* in their sheaths.

That evening the Quartermaster and the transport officer had some difficulty in following the movements of the battalion. The way by the north end of the town, past Eternity Corner and Destruction Bridge, was hardly a health resort. However, the battalion had to be fed; others might

fail, but not the lean and hungry transport or The Mackintosh.

"Come here, Mac, and talk to the long faces in Gaelic; it soothes them," said the transport officer, as the horses commenced to dance a cake-walk into the ditch. At the moment the road was blocked, as other transport waited fretfully while the Bosche lashed Eternity Corner with a hail of metal.

It was dark with a blackness that struck the Quartermaster as being like the inside of a coffin, so inky that even his horses' ears and withers could not be seen. The men dismounted, stood beside their horses, endeavouring to quiet their nervous and excited fidgeting.

"This waiting is certainly the devil," remarked the Quartermaster, sucking thoughtfully at his pipe. "If the Hun only lengthened his range, he'd get a good bagful." The Quartermaster was certainly right; in the crush of nervous horses and restless mules, extrication would have been impossible. Two abreast they were packed, their axles touching in the centre of the narrow road.

"Look out, Mac; we'll be off in a moment: the Highlanders are taking a chance. Stand to, Pompadours. Prepare to mount. Mount!" shouted the transport officer. They were off down a small incline and round the blasted corner, the horses travelling far beyond the schedule speed and the limbers swaying behind like sledges over

glare ice. Once past the corner they slackened up, and through the outskirts of the city, where recently had been the transport lines and Quartermaster's store, they jingled at a rapid trot. Up the road, where fallen trees half blocked the fairway and dead horses occupied the ditches in stiff and ghastly attitudes. Then to the right, where in an open field the transport officer halted them. Here they were comparatively safe, as there were no churches near, and no steeple to attract the Hun shells like moths to a candle.

Here the transport officer and the Quartermaster left the waggons while they set out to find the battalion. The night was young, but though it still wanted some hours until dawn, no time could be wasted. Through St. Michel the two non-combatants hurried to the village of Boscap. Here they found the Medical Officer, standing in the light of an open doorway.

"Whither away?" he asked.

In reply to this question, he related how earlier in the day he had got out rather hastily from the particularly hot corner which at that time was rapidly ceasing to be Battalion Headquarters.

"You'd better ask at Brigade Headquarters: they are next door. As far as I can find out, the battalion has taken to the hills. I've tried to find them and failed."

Inside, Ainslie and Theophilus Goodchild, the two Staff Captains, greeted them.

"Where's the General?" asked the transport officer, who seldom spoke to anyone with less than the crossed batons on his shoulders.

"On the hill in the battle headquarters."

From the two hardworked but still cheerful Staff Officers, they obtained a rapid sketch of the progress of events, and were out again on the road.

"I'm going to report Theophilus for neglect of duty. That's the second time this evening I've asked him for a drink, and that's the second time he's fallen down," the Medical Officer remarked.

Through Boscap they went, where houses on each side of the street burnt and lighted up the scene of devastation. The Germans were still shelling in a haphazard and desultory fashion, if such a languid description could apply to the series of detonations that shook the night behind them.

"Hurry over this spot," said the Medical Officer as they came to the end of the stamped-out village, where the road forked.

It was the parting of the ways, and the Quartermaster and transport officer waged a mighty warfare of words as to their most suitable way. The road to the left led onwards towards where the German lights pierced the darkness and upwards to the village of St. Jacques. To the right the way seemed lost in obscurity.

"I don't mind you two starting a debating

society, but I wish you'd choose a healthier location," remarked the Medical Officer impatiently. "Do you know, there's been a battle going on for two and a half days, and I've had no sleep ?"

The Quartermaster and the transport officer turned to the Medical Officer to settle the dispute.

"The road to the right leads to our old headquarters. There's nothing there; the Bosches hammered it flat this afternoon. You may find some fragments of my kit there if you care to have a look," he replied.

"The road to the left goes to St. Jacques; we still hold that," said the lean and lissom one.

"Do we ?" The Medical Officer raised his eyebrows. "What will you bet ?"

"Well, we did this morning," said the transport officer.

"That's nothing. By to-morrow we'll probably be blown out of Flanders," remarked the Quartermaster cheerfully.

"Did you ask at the Brigade who held St. Jacques ?" came the query from the transport officer.

"Ask ! Why, I asked for a drink, and they hadn't anything." The Medical Officer sat down beside two of his stretcher-bearers who had accompanied him. "Well, I paid my life-insurance money four days ago, and, in any case, I've got two chaps here to carry me down if I'm hit. Wake me up when you've finished the argument."

The Quartermaster wanted to go to the right, the transport officer to the left.

"For Heaven's sake, flip a coin," murmured the Medical Officer.

So a coin was tossed, and in the light of a burning building it turned up a tail. It was a French halfpenny; the Doctor swooped down on it and pocketed it for luck.

The road to St. Jacques wound easily upwards between two rows of poplars; it was strangely silent. A few hundred yards to the left of it the German flares were falling. For upwards of a mile the transport officer bustled on ahead; suddenly he paused.

"What the dickens is this?" His question broke the silence. A German star-shell revealed two large trees fallen across the road, their trunks effectively stopping all traffic. Beyond were two motor-ambulances, one end on to the obstruction, into which it had crashed running down the road on its return journey. The other motor-ambulance was jammed across the road. On the ground lay the bodies of four Red Cross men. All dead. The waggons were empty.

"Took the wrong road, I suppose, and got caught by the falling tree in trying to get out," was the Doctor's diagnosis.

"All killed by bullets, probably machine-guns."

Farther up the road were the bodies of three dead Germans, one with a machine-gun beside him. Thus the entire tragedy was revealed. The

one waggon speeding uphill found itself under fire from the German lines, and, turning, ran for it, pausing just long enough to warn its fellow who was following. The fallen trees, hit by an unlucky shot, barred the way for both, and an advanced party of Germans completed the business by shooting down the drivers. The Germans coming up to see the result of their shooting were caught by the avenging bullets of our own men, and died beside their victims.

"Really, these Germans give me a pain; it's certainly not playing the game shooting Red Cross men," announced the transport officer.

"You're perfectly right," said the Medical Officer. "I wish you'd go over and tell them so."

"Well, they carry up their own machine-guns in ambulance waggons," the Quartermaster put in. "I don't see why we shouldn't play them at their own game."

"Quite right, Mac. You'd cook and eat them, I know, like your ancestors did," said the transport officer.

"They've probably got a machine-gun turned on us now, so for Heaven's sake shut up and let's get on." The Quartermaster was proud of his ancestry and objected to the transport officer's ill-timed remarks.

"I know we're lost, but this is Little Willie's picnic, so I'm hanged if I butt in." The Medical Officer was becoming a trifle bored

Again they started, the transport officer, as before, leading—racing on in front like an expectant lurcher. In the darkness the houses of St. Jacques appeared faintly in front of them.

"Where are we going, sir?" said one of the attendant stretcher-bearers to the Doctor.

"To Berlin, I think, under a prisoners' guard; but you'd better ask Mr. Cousins."

"But that's St. Jacques, isn't it?" The stretcher-bearer was becoming insistent.

"It was the last time I travelled this way," answered the Medical Officer.

"But the Germans took St. Jacques this afternoon," the stretcher-bearer objected.

"Well, why the blue blazing blankety Hades didn't you say so before?" the Medical Officer demanded in a tone of extra special asperity.

They were now about a hundred yards from the village as the Doctor vented the full venom of his wrath on the head of the devoted stretcher-bearer. At this announcement even the transport officer had paused in his onward flight. A star-shell soared up from the village, revealing the figure of a sentry standing in the middle of the road—a German sentry. The transport officer crawled hurriedly into the ditch. The Quartermaster and the Doctor and the two medical orderlies were already there.

The Medical Officer was right: the Pompadours had taken to the hills, or, rather, were still on the

ridge. Mixed in with them were sundry waifs and strays from other units, and near by two other Western regiments still maintained themselves in their trenches. Imperial units shared their hastily constructed defences with them, repelling every effort of the enemy to dislodge them. Everyone was in the line—batmen, pioneers, orderly-room staff, even those manufacturers of harmony who sought a refuge in the band to escape the uncertainty in the trenches, were in the battle front and bearing themselves right nobly.

Headquarters was in a ditch, back of the firing-line, and there the Major and the Adjutant gradually got in touch with the scattered remnants of the regiment.

Down in the village of Boscap the Medical Officer had his dressing-station. Thither he returned, accompanied by the Quartermaster, while the transport officer, having nosed out the position of the battalion, proceeded to feed them.

Of all places during a modern battle, a modern dressing-station is the spot least likely to arouse in anyone the spirit of martial ardour. A clientèle derived from the turmoil of shot and shell is liable at times to show signs of alarm and despondency, and a man with a bullet in him is not always the most cheerful of companions. Thus they come to the dressing-station, a cellar gaping amid the ruins of a wrecked farm-house; a dugout under the lea of a wall; occasionally, when times are still more

strenuous, a haystack or a ditch. On the present occasion the Medical Officer entertained the Quartermaster in an *estaminet*. To facilitate matters, a window-sash had been kicked out, and through this opening, stretchers with their bleeding burdens were passed from time to time. Through the main door the more slightly wounded came. The room, lighted by candles stuck in empty bottles or fixed to the mantelpiece in pools of wax, was eloquent with the new use to which it had been brought. The bar was piled high with bandages and first-aid dressings, bottles containing iodine, and rolls of cotton-wool. The floor was splashed with mud and dirt, pools of blood, and blood-stained clothing lay about amid a profusion of dirty bandages and gory dressings. The wounded lay along the wall, uncomplaining but grumbling. They did not appear to mind their bodily ills or injuries, but were full of criticisms and remarks concerning the conduct of affairs and the progress of the engagement. The air was thick with a profusion of aromas, the smell of explosives and stale humanity, the pungency of antiseptics, and through it all the irritation of the gas.

"Do you think you'll ever be able to taste anything again, Doctor?" asked the Quartermaster as he seated himself on a broken-bottomed chair in the midst of the mess.

"I doubt it," answered the Medical Officer, as, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, displaying a pair

of gory arms, he adjusted a bandage round the head of a wounded man. "I've done my best, but at present rum, bully beef, tobacco, and honey, all taste the same to me."

"Oh, you got the honey all right, did you? I thought you might find it come in useful."

"The best yet, Mac. Old Highland Glory there has been feeding all the wounded on it. They like it."

The Quartermaster surveyed the mess, and smoked in silence. Outside a party halted.

"See what that is," said the Medical Officer, addressing a stretcher-bearer.

"Stretcher case, sir."

"Tell them to shove it in through the window. Here, put this man into the next room and get ready to put all the wounded outside; the ambulance waggons should be here any time. If they don't hurry it will be daylight."

Through the window came a stretcher.

"Hullo, sir, I didn't expect to see you again," said the wounded man to the Quartermaster. It was the subaltern of the Glasgow Highlanders. "Please give me a cigarette; I've smoked all my own."

The Medical Officer handed him his case and examined the damage, while the Highlander smoked in silence and watched his face.

"Nasty smash, Doctor? Foot gone, I think. How long will it be until I'm fit again?"

"How did it happen?" asked the Medical Officer, as he removed the red soaked sock and puttee, and cut away the remnants of a boot.

"We counter-attacked at 3; my Captain got it right away through the head, and I was laid out by a piece of shell almost at once." Then, turning to the Quartermaster, "You certainly missed it; our chaps did awfully well."

CHAPTER X

THE DOINGS OF SOME DETAILS

At intervals during the battle the Medical Officer wandered in to see how things were going on at Brigade Headquarters, and to obtain news. Returning in the afternoon from one such visit, he was both astonished and enraged to find Private McMutchkin, who had recently been attached to the stretcher-bearers, in a high state of alcoholic inebriety.

"Sergeant Bowden, how did the War-horse get into that horrible condition?"

"They found a barrel of wine in the room there." The sergeant indicated the door leading to the back of the *estaminet*.

The Medical Officer, in a state of high dudgeon, stalked into the room at the rear. As he did so he encountered Private McSpeldron, who discreetly hid a mess-tin full of red liquid behind his person.

"Where's this barrel of wine, McSpeldron?" the Medical Officer demanded.

"Here, sir; in this very room, sir," answered the polite Highlander.

In the room was not one but two barrels. The

Medical Officer turned the taps, and out streamed the blood-red liquid. It flowed over the tiled floor and ran through the doorway into the dressing-room in front, eddying into corners, and bearing on its ruby surface wisps of straw and flakes of cotton-wool. It was as though two arteries had burst, and the Doctor, standing beside the streaming hogsheads, made no effort to stem their flowing life-stream.

Private McSpeldron, otherwise called Highland Glory, suddenly appeared in the doorway and addressed the Doctor.

"If you please, sir, you're wanted in the front room; there's a badly wounded man coming down the road."

The Medical Officer left the wine-casks and hurried into the front room, while Highland Glory, taking his place, deftly turned the taps in the barrels and shut off the flowing red wine.

"It's a peetiful waste," he remarked to himself. "God send there's a wounded man on the road, or the Doctor'll be back here in a minute."

Good luck favoured the Highlander, for at the front door Captain Ainslie appeared.

"Hullo, Doctor; you seem pretty well over the boot-tops in it," he exclaimed, surveying the red wine, which now lay to the depth of at least one inch over the floor of the *estaminet*.

"Yes, but it's not all blood, old thing—only about half of it."

"What do you think of this?" said Theophilus Goodchild, on the occasion of one of the Medical Officer's visits to Brigade Headquarters, while the battle was at its height.

In the room was a military policeman in charge of a signaller. The signaller had been detailed earlier in the day on a duty which took him far back from the firing-line. There he had found a badly wounded horse which had bolted along the road, and gradually weakening from loss of blood, lay down in a ditch to die. The signaller, to shorten its suffering, shot it through the head, and was promptly arrested by the law-abiding policeman for his unorthodox conduct in that he had discharged fire-arms far behind the firing-line!

The incorruptible minion of the law proceeded to return the prisoner to his unit, deaf to his entreaties that his work was there and had to be done, and up the road they came, by Eternity Corner and Destruction Bridge, almost to the firing-line. Such are our military police. Duty before all things.

That afternoon the Punjab Division attacked. From Boscap the ground fell away gently to rise again in a sloping ridge that extended away to the north. Here in a wood, and amid hedges green with the first colouring of spring, lay the newly entrenched Germans, and here across the open the Indians advanced. In long lines extended to

several paces they dashed forward, up the gradual slope of ground.

In the bright warm sunshine, with spring bursting into verdant glory on every side, it looked like a field-day, but as the rifles spat and the machine-guns spattered, first one and then another dropped.

Some lay where they fell, others struggled slowly back to the dressing-station, and still the thin khaki line went onwards. On the left the French were attacking; blue and a flash of silver as the long keen bayonets dashed to meet the enemy.

A trifle shy and somewhat hesitatingly the little dusky warriors came to the dressing-station door. Perhaps they wondered how the Canadians would receive them, and remembering a certain Komagatu Maru incident, expected that a poll-tax might be charged. No exclusion policy was in force in the village of Boscap; the cheery little Gurkhas were promptly fed and had their wounds bound up. With them they had brought their prisoners, lengthy Prussians who walked delicately beside their captors, eyeing them askance and keeping a careful watch on the *kukris* resting in the sheaths.

There were wounded among the prisoners, and all looked weary and were very dirty. During those days there were many prisoners, and all seemed pleased that as far as they were concerned

the matter was ended so happily. They were quiet and eager to obey, showing in their movements the effect of an iron-handed discipline. There was one: he was an officer and should have known better, for his behaviour was most extraordinary; he spat at the Medical Officer, when he attempted to approach him, like an angry tom-cat, in a manner altogether unbefitting an officer and a gentleman, if there are any such in the Fatherland.

The War-horse and Highland Glory were out following up the attack, binding up the wounded in the open, risking a hundred deaths, and frightened to return to the dressing-station, from which they had been driven by a stream of vindictive mutterings from the Medical Officer.

All night long those silent, tireless, and now sober Highlanders laboured, carrying in their wounded burdens and ever returning for more. Towards midnight they brought in an officer, one of the Canadians, whom they found lying patiently, silently in the darkness, unable to move.

"Hullo, Hume—you here?" said the Doctor, recognizing a friend. "Where is he hit?"—turning to the waiting stretcher-bearer as he saw how far the tide of life had ebbed.

"I beg your pardon, sir," explained the War-horse modestly, as he wiped his dripping forehead; "he's hit in the back low down. He's so weak

he can hardly talk; he's been lying out for two nights."

There, just below the centre of the backbone, was the little puckered blue mark—a tiny hole through which a spirit was to make its escape. The gentle movement that had revealed the scar roused the wounded man.

"Hullo, Doctor; I'm badly hit, I fear."

As he had done frequently before, the Doctor lied, lied with a cheerful smile, to hide the sorrow in his heart.

"Tell me why it is I can't move my legs, and why my feet are all pins and needles."

"Shock—only shock; you'll be as right as rain in a day or two."

The Doctor turned away. In a corner a Gurkha had torn his dressings from his sightless eyes; he also was finding out the truth—finding that the dark night in which he lived was not merely caused by a bandage.

Out on the road the Doctor, looking up to the cloudless, starry night, heartily damned the war and the men who ordained that such things could be.

Then he remembered the journey up in the train to the firing-line two short months ago, and there to the south was that same star which then had shone so brightly, and which Lieutenant Hume had called his own. And as he looked he saw it had lost its glory, and was pale with a faded dimness.

Down near the cross-roads, by the village of St. Michel, the ambulance waggons were being loaded up with their living freight. Dressing-stations on either side of the road disgorged their quota of sufferers. Lying along the roadside on stretchers, or seated with their backs against the walls of houses, they silently waited their turn. Each motor ambulance as it came up was filled, and doctors and orderlies worked like stevedores, packing each with its cargo of humanity. Lying and sitting, they started off on the bumping journey to the field ambulances and clearing hospitals. The Quartermaster and Paymaster of the Pompadours watched the scene in silence. At the cross-roads a stream of transport coming up the main road was turning to the right. Two motor ambulances were coming up empty, and two returning packed with wounded men. For the moment the road was blocked with an impassable jamb of waggons, horses, and men. Right in the midst of this crush of packed humanity, screaming through the night, a German shell plumped. Down went horses and men together. The scene lighted for the moment by the bursting shell was plunged again in inky darkness, from which came the sounds of struggling man and horse mixed in inextricable confusion.

The concussion of the shock had seated both the Quartermaster and the Paymaster side by side on the cobbles, but before they had time to struggle

to their feet, stretcher-bearers were out, bringing in the wounded and clearing up the débris. In this the transport men were not second to the medical services. Dead and dying horses were cut loose, and the transport moved out of those infernal cross-ways.

Now one of the wrecked ambulance waggons started to burn, its gasoline tank lighted by the bursting shell. The glow of the blazing spirit illumined the scene in lurid detail: the wounded lying where they had been flung by the explosion, the horses struggling to rise, and the anxious, earnest men fighting to save their comrades.

"Come on, Pay," shouted the Quartermaster, as he dashed in to help. "There'll be another shell here immediately; let's get these chaps under cover."

The Paymaster, following in the wake of the Quartermaster, found his hand grasped by a pair of eyes and a red splash where a nose and chin should have been. The remains of a tongue attempted to beg for help, but it was from the eyes—eyes in which he saw reflected a thousand horrors—that the real appeal came. The blazing gasoline, streaming across the road, caught the blankets of men waiting their turn in the waggons. The canvas tilts of the waggons were burning fiercely, and the flames swirled across the road. Other shells following that first lucky hit, whistled overhead, bursting just beyond the cross-roads,

and, still indifferent to the thousand deaths, exploded, blazed, and shrieked around where the work of saving the wounded went on.

Presently it was done. The wounded were removed from immediate danger, the flames were beaten out, and the cross-roads cleared of the shattered transport.

The Quartermaster, with a face like a chimney-sweep and nursing a burnt hand, left a wounded doctor, the last burden he had helped to carry in, to the care of his colleagues, and wiping the soot and sweat out of his eyes, turned to the Paymaster.

"Time we were getting home, Pay; are you ready to start?"

The Germans were still lining the roads with shrapnel as they went across the fields, pausing frequently as they were held up by some fresh line of wire or where a ditch had to be jumped. The Paymaster stoutly maintained that he knew the way, but the Quartermaster was several times forced to doubt the accuracy of the statement as some new obstruction brought them to a sudden halt.

The Germans were shelling the entrance to the city, as the two non-combatants called a halt to discuss the situation. Finally, taking their luck in both hands, they picked an interval between two shells, and dashed across the bridge leading into the city. Here was a scene of desolation disclosed in the dreary dawn. Turning into the

main square, they surveyed the scene of wreckage. In the city around them shells were falling, but in front of them the open space lay silent. A black cat, with wild staring amber eyes, the only thing moving in sight, picked its way delicately amid the uptorn paving-stones, and paused to smell a fragment of shell. Evidently it was fresh fallen and still hot, for the cat sneezed suddenly in the silence.

"A black cat," said the Quartermaster; "that's for luck."

"Yes," said the Paymaster. "We're not going to be killed this time."

In front of them, gradually reddening in the early morning sun, stood the ruins of the church and the town hall. It seemed that here the German spite had concentrated; spires, buttresses, and pillars, all had crumbled and tumbled together, giving the whole a melted appearance as of a gigantic sugar-cake collapsing on a hot day. Great rifts yawned in the causeway, and right in front of the town hall the father of all shell-holes gaped big as a circus.

All around them, in the fields and woods, men were fighting and dying. Yet here, where the full force of the ruthlessness had concentrated, was the desolation of desolations. Forlorn and forsaken, a modern Carthage. The two non-combatants, as they gazed on the fallen walls and crumbled causeway, felt the loneliness of this

finished wreck lie heavy on their souls. For the loneliness of the mountains is nothing to the loneliness of a deserted city!

The Quartermaster called the cat to him. But it would have none of him, standing amid the wreckage of what had been its home, it lashed its tail from side to side in manifest disapproval—the one creature in the whole of that dead city that declined to flee.

"All right, pussy; don't blame me if they kill you. I've warned you," said the Quartermaster.

In the entrance of a house a soldier was kneeling, his face buried in his arm, against the doorpost, his rifle still clutched in his other hand. The Paymaster touched him, trying to look into his face. The rifle, loosened from the nerveless fingers, clattered on to the pavement. He was dead. The cat, alarmed at the sudden sound, disappeared amid the ruins.

The Paymaster straightened himself up. "Come along, Mac; let's get on. I'm sick of this."

Onward they tramped through the silent streets. Here the front of a house had been blown out, blocking the road with wreckage. Inside, the dining-table was set for a dinner, the white cloth and folded napkins, the glass and flowers, telling of an interrupted festivity. In front were the bodies of three civilians, one a woman, mowed down in their hurried flight, their few possessions lying beside them in hastily tied bundles. As

far as could be seen, these three and the soldier were the entire harvest of that ruthless bombardment; millions of pounds in weight and cost, and three civilians and one soldier dead!

The two non-combatants set their faces west, leaving the city of the dead with its gaping ruins and battered houses behind; and as they walked along the high-road beneath the budding poplars, the sun rose behind them, and the sad, torn landscape seemed to smile amidst its tears. It was as though by some strange chance they had come from death to life; the birds were singing in the branches, and the apple and cherry trees were gay with blossom.

CHAPTER XI

"AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY"

It was the morning of the seventh day. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do, but the seventh——" Certainly for six days we had laboured, and as the officers of the Pompadours, after seeing to the requirements of their men, dropped into breakfast one after another, they felt that they had done all they had to do. From a six days' nightmare we woke to find ourselves famous—at least, so it seemed from the London papers. Not that we had been to sleep; that was still to come. Here we were, seated at a round table in the rear of the Quartermaster's store, munching our ham and eggs, and devouring the news in the morning papers, while the Quartermaster and the transport officer hovered round us, and plied us with fresh delicacies and steaming cups of coffee. The transport officer surpassed himself on this occasion, as Lieutenant Allonby, who felt like nothing on earth after a week's precarious existence, found to his delight.

"Have some more ham and eggs?"

"No, thanks."

"Some coffee?"

"No, thanks."

"All right; if you're ready, your bed is."

Upstairs the transport officer led the way. Here Allonby found his blankets waiting for him. "Now, when you're ready for it, here's a double tot of rum; a bottle of white wine; there's some cigars on that soap-box; and I've the *Daily Hustler* for you to read."

The somewhat jaded Lieutenant lay back amid his blankets, inhaling smoke that certainly is not retailed at two for a quarter, as the rum inside him glowed comfortingly. After all, a battle is not so bad if it leads to such an extremity of comfort. The battalion had not been relieved as a single unit, but each company, as it had received its orders, moved down the long road and through the burning villages of Boscap and St. Michel, and through the nocturnal hurricane of the City of Distress. The result was the officers were not in time for breakfast. They came singly or in pairs, but for the most part they came not at all. As the remnants of each company marched in, their officers reported; but in two out of the four companies the reports were brought in by sergeants, as there were no officers.

It had indeed been a fairly complete clean out; and as the officers met as a battalion mess, the first for many days, the interest in the fates of the absentees was not second even to their hunger for

a meal. At first it appeared very bad with eighteen empty places at mess and only five fighting officers surviving. They were absent—that seemed enough; some we knew were dead. They had been seen to die—that was enough; for them we had no hope. But for the others there was still a chance: that little spark of promise that always goes with the word of ill-omen—"missing."

Madden and Bromfield both were killed, shot through the head before the Germans invaded the front line. Leckie had died, with a bullet in his heart, while shooting calmly and composedly across the parapet. A noted shot, Leckie, at all our western meetings—and in the trenches, for that matter, also. He seldom scored other than a bull's-eye; it was only right, if he had to go, that he should go out thus cleanly and painlessly, who had ever dealt so accurately with his opponents. Beaton also we knew of, shot through the head. On one occasion previously the bullet had grazed his head, marking his scalp with a ruddy parting. That time the Bosche shot too high; this time the bullet made more certain; three inches lower, it got him in the centre of his forehead. Then of the others—Tiny Pillows had been seen badly wounded, but still fighting his machine-gun as he hung to its stock, with the gun team all knocked out around him. Captain Younger, his head in a bandage, had stayed in the trench he and his men had defended so well.

We went through the list, taking each name in turn, as we wondered, guessed, and speculated as to their fates. Honest John, Lindsay, and Bridges, were known to be among the wounded. Each had been seen by some of the non-combatants as they were carried off to hospital. And so the survivors sat at their breakfast, dirty, unshaven and weary, their faces marked with new lines that many days would not suffice to wipe away.

"I wish you'd take the Adjutant out and get him a shave." It was the man of God addressing the transport officer.

"What's wrong, Padre? Don't you like my whiskers?" asked the Adjutant.

"No; they're putting the Doctor off his food."

"Well, you'll have to get used to them. They remind me of South Africa. I'm going to keep them on."

Bit by bit we pieced the parts of the puzzle together, learning how the regiment, after falling back from their trenches, had gathered together along the ridge, linking up with the still determined Highlanders and the remainder of our own Western Brigade. How the Prairie Rifles and the Saskatoons had remained in their trenches to the last, despite the gas, despite everything. How, with Imperial units coming up to relieve them, they had held on, fighting until the sparks flew and the cows came home to roost. How the Brigadier,

our Brigadier, had come among us and told us to keep on fighting, and, when we'd finished that, to fight some more. And we heard how the transport had flitted about from place to place, standing to, ever ready to move, as the German guns found them out, and how the Quartermaster's staff, back in the City of Distress, had left their store at one door as the shells came in at the other.

Well, it had been a great fight, and we, assembled round the table, were the lucky ones. To us would be the praise, and perchance some of the glory too; but up there on the ridge, to the northeast, beyond the City of Distress, lay the real heroes—those who had fought so well and in fighting thus had died, in order that Canada, the Empire, and the world, might yet be free.

So musing, we went in search of our blankets; and here, as in the case of Lieutenant Allonby, the transport officer had done us proud, and we slept as they say only warriors and the just can sleep. Well, we must have been one or the other, as our slumbers were unbroken. The rum ration has been responsible for saving many lives and cheering up spirits during many a dark hour, but certainly never was a drink so welcome and altogether necessary as on that occasion.

Late in the afternoon Captain Wales and Lieutenant Allonby woke. The Huns were shelling the village.

"Really, this is too bad. They might give us a rest sometimes," remarked the Captain.

"My dear, the Bosche is perfectly impossible. This is pure spite; but as we've got to move out behind the canal, I suppose we had better be going?"

The Western Brigade was holding the bank of a canal. The Pompadours were in support, playing about in the hedgerows like rabbits. Here we dug ourselves in, and daily, as the Germans shelled us, improved our shelter and attained to greater safety. The Germans were by no means bigoted in their tastes: with an open hand they dispersed among us high explosives and shrapnel, while their aeroplanes from the simmering heights of blue above dropped bombs on us.

Here we made acquaintance of the Ramrod dugout, so called because it was as twisted as a corkscrew and in deference to its inventor—a gallant sergeant, who, when the first shell whistled in the distance, ran to earth like a terrier down a rat-hole. Here his feet could just be seen appearing from the exit, while from the bowels of the earth came noises as of one burrowing strenuously. Presently he would emerge like a gopher, and with his nose and eyebrows plastered with mud, take a rapid survey of the surrounding country, only to disappear in a wink if so much as a blade of grass moved or a leaf rustled on the tree. The men got lots of fun out of it. "Look

out, Sergeant Ramrod; there's a shell !"—that was enough. The dauntless N.C.O. would at once do the disappearing trick, and the excavation commenced all over again. So deep was he immersed, he never knew if the shells were flying past; and as his antics were about our only form of entertainment, he got many alarms.

And while we lay along the hedge-bottom, and the shells flew overhead and burst in the soft earth behind us, we read in the morning papers that the Germans were short of ammunition, that they had no copper for the driving bands, and that their shrapnel was composed of glass balls and marbles !

" I wonder who this dope's intended for ?" remarked full Private Freeborn, late citizen of U.S.A., handing a copy of the *Daily Dream* to his fellow body-snatcher, Private Lavigne. " Seems kind of absurd to peddle such stuff round here. I've not seen a dud all day."

" What is it you are talking about ?" asked War-horse McMutchkin from the bottom of the ditch where he was idly reposing, his hat tilted over his nose and his pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth.

" This 'ere *Dily Dream* ses the 'uns 'as only marbles left to ply with, an' spend the 'ole die peppering us with glass bawls," answered Lavigne authoritatively from the depths of his newspaper.

"Is that so? Well, I saw them play marbles with the head of a sergeant in a Welsh regiment down the road just now, back of the farm," remarked Highland Glory as he joined the party.

"It's a terrible pity we don't manage to have them that writes this stuff here with us to count the number of shells that do burst," said the War-horse.

"I guess they might run off a special sheet for us over here omitting all the eyewash; it gives me a pain. Now they say they're short of gold."

"You'd better not get taken prisoner, Phil, with those teeth of yours," said Lavigne.

Highland Glory was both alarmed and angry; he had just returned from Eccles, where he had been sent on a message. Then, being told to wait an hour for an answer, he had strolled into the churchyard, partly because he had none of his pay left to warrant a successful visit to an *estaminet*, and partly because the blood of his Highland ancestry encouraged him, with morbid fancies, to wander among the graves. In the churchyard, while amusing himself by deciphering the letters on the crosses, he was suddenly confronted by his own name.

There was no doubt about it. There it stood for all the world to read, complete with his regimental number and initials. Horror-struck and filled with a feeling of impending doom, he fled

from the churchyard; and forgetting entirely the answer to the message, he hastened back to the battalion. On the way back he had, on three separate occasions, seen a single magpie—and this in the mating-time, when the fancies of all sensible birds had properly turned to thoughts of love; then, the sudden death of the Welsh sergeant at his side, had completely finished him. Suspicious and filled with strange and horrible beliefs, he refused to be comforted.

"I'm not long for this world, anyhow," he wound up his depressing narrative.

"You'd better go sick, Mac. Tell the Doctor you were gassed. You look blue enough already. Just pretend to breathe a trifle hard," the War-horse advised.

"Go sick! And be sent back for a court-martial. I'm not fancying field punishment under our doctor. He'd keep me digging ditches all day long."

"Why don't yer get on with the Preacher as bat-man, and give out the 'ymn-books on church parade," suggested Lavigne; "that's a safe job."

"What's all this? A convalescent camp or a Sunday-school treat?" It was the Medical Officer who had come up unobserved. "You look pretty sick, McSpeldron; got a stomach-ache?"

"Please, sir, I've just been buried."

"What, by a shell?"

"I'm not sure, but think it must have been a

meenister and a burial-party. I wasn't present myself."

"How could you be buried if you weren't there? You're going crazy."

"No, sir, I'm not daft. I'm lying dead and buried in Eccles at the present moment, between a Colonel and a sergeant-major."

"Have you been drinking?"

"Not a drop. Not since that day at Bosky when you wasted all the wine."

Gradually the Medical Officer arrived at the truth of the situation, and for once a bright idea seemed to strike him.

"Where's your identity disc?"

Private McSpeldron unbuttoned his tunic and searched diligently among the folds of his various shirts for the article in question. It was not forthcoming.

"I've not got it."

"No, of course not; you dropped it when you were tying up a wounded man, and somebody found it and tied it on to him."

"That's just a possibility," answered McSpeldron doubtfully.

"Possibility! It's the only true explanation," thundered the Medical Officer, who prided himself on his clearness of perception. "You'd better secure the cross and carry it about with you as a souvenir. Nelson always carried a coffin about with him."

"Yes, Mac," remarked the War-horse; "it's bound to come in useful sooner or later."

"But the magpies, doctor? Three single magpies?"

"Bachelors, confirmed bachelors. Now, if you people have nothing to do but discuss sudden death in various forms, we'll do a little camp-cleaning. Fall in."

The medical detail spent the rest of the day cleaning up the camp, and as The McSpeldron's misfortunes were considered to be directly responsible for their laborious duties, he met with little sympathy.

Here we received a much-needed batch of reinforcements. They came to us in the morning in all the glory of their new kits and fresh equipment, the possessors of sundry necessary articles of which our battered remnants were short. Prior to being broken up and attached to the various companies, they were fallen out in a corner of a field, from whence they gazed at us across the hedge with apparent interest. With trustful simplicity they spread their belongings about on the grass, and wandered out to hear our various tales. Possibly what they were told lacked nothing in the telling. Then the Germans commenced shelling; the reinforcements at the first burst of shrapnel took to the ditches and dugouts, and scattered into thin air. Their possessions scattered also, for the Pompadours were amongst them, re-equipping

themselves, without thought of an indent. Messtins, blankets, water-bottles, haversacks, changed owners in a flash, and when the new arrivals returned to look, they found their worldly goods vanished and the Pompadours smiling a smile that was childlike and bland. They had most of the cards up their sleeves, and there they would remain.

The Medical Officer was busy; he was the only poultice-walloper left on deck in the brigade. Gillette, of the Assiniboias, died at the door of his dressing-station, hit by a falling bomb. Head of the Saskatoons stayed by his wounded, refusing to desert them, and finally became a prisoner; and Featherstone, of the Prairie Rifles, was badly wounded as he attended to one of his battalion on the ridge. Along the canal bank the Saskatoons and Assiniboias lay entrenched, with the remnants of the Highland Brigade; and here for a week they remained, while the guns pounded them and the Taubes circled overhead.

Battalion Headquarters were in the usual farm, a place fraught with infinite possibilities; already it had been hit, and its peaked, thatched roof would offer a poor protection at the best of times. For that matter the headquarters had had enough of thatched roofs. So the Medical Officer went out and called his body-snatchers together, and they dug a row of what they called dugouts. The Major and the Adjutant, whom he summoned with pride to view his handiwork, mistook the excava-

tions for an embryo graveyard, and asked when the burial service was to begin. So they all retired back to the farm-house, which was of all farm-houses the most dismal. Then the shelling recommenced, and the house was hit again, so they retired to the barn, which was, if possible, more unsafe and dismal than the house. Finally, when things quieted down, they resumed their occupation of the farm-house, while the Adjutant busied himself with his customary nominal roll, which was now merely a skeleton affair, and the Colonel recommended various people for promotion and others for decorations. Then the owners of the house came back and removed the stove, while the Medical Officer strafed them for inhospitable and scurrilous knaves, and threatened to write to King Albert. As a result there was no means of cooking, and the gloomy kitchen, with its grey walls and dirty floor, looked more like a vault than ever. Then Captain Cope, who was collecting relics, removed the only crucifix from the walls.

"That's finished it," said the Doctor. "I may belong to the Auld Kirk, but I decline to stay any longer in the house after you've taken that thing away."

So the Medical Officer went out and lay in his grave, which he called his dugout; and though he didn't eat worms, he felt like it, and refused to be comforted, and prophesied all sorts of horrors

and destruction. And the day after the Pompadours had been relieved, that house of gloom sustained a direct hit, and collapsed like a pack of cards.

The transport, retiring to a respectful distance out of shell-fire, found themselves amid what at first looked like some picturesque offshoot of Barnum and Bailey's. Tall, dusky warriors in flowing cloaks of blue and scarlet, with red leather trappings on clean-limbed Arab steeds. These were the French native cavalry. With a dignified air of aloofness, and a predilection for red wine, they strolled about smoking their cigarettes in a calm of silence. The transport officer would have none of them, and doubled the sentries on his waggons, and counted his horses three times every hour. He refused to sleep, bounding out of bed many times at night to see whether these children of the desert had broken like wolves into his sheepfold, until the Quartermaster, who shared a tent with him, threatened to go out and cut the picketing ropes.

The Pompadours were all a trifle fed up. When a regiment loses three-quarters of its officers, and more than half its men, it is idle to expect that it will show no effects. Besides, we were tired of being shelled, and very tired of standing-to perpetually. The Eastern Brigade was relieved, and the Jocks left their temporary cantonments on the canal banks, but the Westerners still remained.

It was a dark night, without moon or stars, when the Brigade finally assembled near the cross-roads of Malmartre, and commenced their march southwards. The route lay by a series of cross-roads, and the hedgerow fighting had ill-attuned our feet to marching, and in the darkness we stumbled in the ruts and wrenched our ankles in the shell-holes. It was hot as a July night, and our packs hung heavy on our shoulders. With the best spirit in the world it would have been difficult to be cheerful; and then, although we were glad to be out and on the move again, we could not forget all we were leaving behind us, and our friends upon the ridge. Hour after hour we plodded on, and in the close, breathless darkness of night the thirst that we developed was profound. The men had ceased even to grumble and had fallen silent, and in the stillness nothing could be heard but the tramp of men and rumble of waggons, and once or twice a sudden sound of anger which told of a twisted ankle. Behind us boomed the guns, ours and theirs, and along the distant horizon the star-shells rose and fell.

Suddenly from nowhere, flooding us from all around, came a burst of song. To us, tired, thirsty, and altogether fed up, it seemed as a burst of heavenly music. Perhaps it was the angels of Mons, come to ground to cheer us up. No, it couldn't be that; they would have played "Onward, Christian soldiers!" or "Through

the night of doubt and sorrow" to us. No, this was something different. "Hold your hand out, naughty boy!" It must be St. Peter—that's the way he'd probably talk.

It was the band of the Robin Hoods, welcoming us from out the sights and sounds behind us. The effect was magical. The straggled sections of fours closed up, shoulders which had sagged forward beneath their packs braced up, and marching in steady time we swung along the ringing road behind the blare of music.

As we left the band behind, the melody still came to us fading with the distance, but its effect was with us. The Pompadours had come to life. A glow of friendship filled us for the Robin Hoods, and the Canadians will not soon forget how they played us down the road and out of that grim and death-smitten city, and sent us on our way, braced up with the finest tonic in the world. Packs were hitched up, mouth-organs appeared, and the Pompadours sang as they marched down into the sleeping city of Malines.

CHAPTER XII

OUT TO GRASS

Rest billets: there is something very pleasant in the name. We arrived with the dawn, yet not before our host had risen.

The Doctor, speaking execrable French, demanded beer in a thirsty voice, while the Adjutant, already seated in the kitchen, was talking to Madame. That first drink after the long night march—how we gloated over it! It was not the watery, washy liquid of the *estaminets*, but, as Monsieur Jules informed us, made on the premises.

"Encore un autre," said the Medical Officer, with an accent like a rasp-saw. "I hardly tasted that one. Help! But I'm tired; that last mile nearly fixed me."

"What, did you walk all the way?" asked that rigid teetotaller, the Major, who had condescended to sip a cup of coffee.

"Yes, every inch. I had a bet with Willie Cousins I'd walk the whole way, so the body-snatchers took it in turn to ride Rhubarb."

We went to bed in the broad daylight, wrapped in our blankets on the stone floor, the sun shining

through the windows and the larks soaring skywards outside—and woke in the still peace of an unruffled spring day.

It was a rich and cheerful country-side, with green fields, and fruit-trees white with blossom; and as we strolled about and waited for the batman to prepare our breakfast, we drew in long, deep draughts of the pure fresh air. We had slept well; our thoughts were all in front of us, away from the troubles of the last few days.

"How did you sleep, Pills?" inquired the Adjutant.

"Sleep? Like a corpse." The Medical Officer had an air mattress, which his batman inflated every night. He always maintained that when he couldn't sleep, he loosened the valve slightly and inhaled the fumes that escaped. He said it was like chloroform. His batman had a well-mellowed breath!

"Here we can breathe again," said the Adjutant, "without the taste of gas."

"Yes; and my sense of taste is coming back, thank Heaven," the Major remarked. It certainly seemed so as the ham and eggs evaporated from his plate.

"Major, I protest. How am I to keep the mess bills down when you eat six eggs at every sitting? Look at the Padre with the marmalade. Padre, that's not porridge you're eating," remonstrated the Medical Officer.

"Well, what about the beer you drink? And what happens to the Major's rum ration and mine?" the man of God inquired.

"Don't ask leading questions, Padre, and go on with your breakfast."

Rest billets. We were there to rest. At first it appeared so, and then came the order that we were to be ready to move at short notice, so our rest seemed suddenly to fade away. Yet there was Malines—a one-horse town, it is true, but nevertheless a town. It was quite near, so we might have been worse off. Our reinforcements turned out to be extraordinarily good; we had certainly misjudged them when, under the influence of shell-fire, we pinched their equipment!

The General who commanded the army came to see us and thanked us for what we had done, and our own Generals of Division and Brigade did the same, and we received presents from many sources: one from no less a person than Her Majesty Queen Alexandra. So, gradually, we began to feel we had done something.

The Medical Officer had large sick-parades. It was always the way in the Pompadours. If the battalion was going to the trenches, or to do any fighting, the sick at once appeared to get well as with a touch of magic; but in rest billets, when the duties of the day called for route marches and kit inspections, they tumbled over one another to be excused off parade.

"How can I get sick-leave?" asked the Paymaster, who was of an inquiring turn of mind, as the Medical Officer entered the mess-room after a strenuous time with sundry personages who appeared inclined to work their tickets.

"Can't be done," answered the Medical Officer firmly.

"Tell me, Doctor: what is a nice pleasant disease I could get that would insure my going to England?" the Padre inquired.

"You'd better take to drink and have D.T.'s," was all the comfort he got.

The Major had been put on a diet and presented with a bottle of brown mixture, which he imbibed mysteriously three times a day, encouraged by the Medical Officer. Captain Cope, who was thirsting for promotion, insisted on pressing him to partake of pickles, canned mushrooms, and other horrors to which the Commanding Officer was extremely partial, in order to clear the way in front of him.

"Have some curried shrimps, Colonel?" said Captain Cope.

"No, thank you; I'd like to, but the Doctor won't permit it."

"Well, how am I to get command of the battalion if you won't? I'd like to know," remarked the scheming Captain.

The Quartermaster complained of sleeplessness, and whenever the Medical Officer was around

showed a shaking hand, which he said called for at least a month's sick-leave.

The only one, however, to have any success was the Paymaster. He chose the happy device of falling from his horse and complained of severe and racking pains in the back. It was like the ten little nigger-boys: one after another the officers of the Pompadours were disappearing.

The Quartermaster was living in an *estaminet.* Very peaceful, too. "Au Retour de Tonkin" seemed to encourage the quenching of a thirst, developed in the sweltering Eastern heat. They are original, the names that hang over the doors of these most acceptable rest-houses. There is the "Au Transvaal," reminiscent of a time when we and our gallant allies were not so cordial in our *entente* as at present! They cater to a variety of tastes. Just round the corner from the insane asylum, in a certain provincial town bearing an historic name, is the "Estaminet au Descent de l'Asile," ready to welcome the newly discharged patient, who, doubtless rejoicing in his newly regained freedom, would not be slow to take advantage of its proffered hospitality.

In another place there is the "Belle Vue de Cimetière." Here, in all probability, the mourners returning from the graveside are intended to drown their sorrows, while at the same time keeping a watchful eye on the sexton putting down the sods.

Then there was the "Moine Fou." There was

a difference in opinion as to what this meant, the Quartermaster maintaining the gentleman in question was certainly drunk, while the Doctor asserted it meant crazy !

" I think the Doctor is right," said the Padre judicially. " ' Fou ' may mean ' drunk ' in your country, but here it has quite another meaning." The Quartermaster was unconvinced; " fou " had always meant " fu'," and would always mean the same thing for all the ministers and doctors in the world.

And so on through a succession of original titles: the " Bon Fermier," the " Bon Chant des Oiseaux," the " Pot au Lait," the " Belle Odour de l'Abattoir "—truly a varied and interesting collection. They occurred with a frequency and persistency that at first we might have found alarming; but the days of crime due to the wine-cup were practically forbye, whether because we had learnt man's first great lesson—how much he can hold—or because the fermented beverages on retail could not be bought in sufficient quantities, with the small sums of money at our command, to do more than give us a kindly glow.

All this time we were under the order to " stand to," to be ready to move—an order that cramped our style, and in large part restricted our freedom; and then finally came the summons to be off: we were going south. I am certain that everyone was relieved, for just at the moment nobody was

inclined to return to the north, which meant the City of Distress.

Two days later we were marching towards the ruined remnant of what had once been a village. As we approached, excitement was in the air. For a wonder we were marching in the daylight, and as we advanced we met with first one and then another batch of prisoners. Dusty and tired they looked as they came along surrounded by their guards. There were German helmets to burn: everybody seemed to have two or three, and all manner of other mementoes also.

The stretcher-bearers in the rear of the battalion were singing as they marched along the way. Mouth-organs were going full blast, alternating with the whistling of pipe tunes by our Highlanders.

In a field by the roadside an old lady was spreading manure—an old lady with a short skirt displaying aged ankles, and feet disappearing into wooden shoes. She evidently met with the War-horse's approval.

"There you are, boys," he called. "Look: there's the sort of wife you young lads want to marry."

"Yes, I guess she wouldn't want to go to the movies every other night," Freeborn admitted.

The Medical Officer and the transport officer had quarrelled. I think one had put the other under arrest for some reason or another. Exactly

what it was has not yet been established. In the afternoon we fell out in a thin drizzle of rain, to wait some hours until nightfall, when we would move on toward our village.

The Medical Officer and the transport officer were still at loggerheads. The trouble was probably the water-carts; they never could agree exactly to whom they belonged, or what position they should occupy in the battalion procession. When we moved on again, we met with other transport on the road; battalions were coming down the road meeting us, and in the rain and dark, the difficulty of keeping touch with the rest of the battalion in front of us was increasingly severe. The climax came when one of the limbers lurched suddenly sideways, and slid gently into the ditch. The air was blue with the barking of the transport officer as the remainder of the battalion disappeared in the dark. The horses scrambled and plunged as they struggled to extricate the limber from the mire, but without result. Poised at a reckless angle, threatening to upset at any moment, it refused to budge. Then help came from a most unexpected quarter.

"Let's have some ropes, Willie, and we'll pull the ruddy thing out for you." It was the Medical Officer speaking. Ropes were instantly forthcoming and tied to the spokes of the wheels. The medical detail grabbed hold, the horses snorted and hauled, the stretcher-bearers pulled and tugged

and man-handled the deeply sunk wheels, and the limber was again restored to its proper place in the centre of the high-road.

"Thank you," said the transport officer. Five minutes later an irritable Adjutant, galloping down the high-road at imminent risk of his life, found the two missing officers, seated on the road-side with their feet in the ditch trying to squeeze a second drink out of the transport officer's flask.

"Are you going to spend the whole night here?" Captain Grosvenor demanded querulously.

"Not now that you've rolled up to disturb our peace," the Medical Officer answered, as he returned the flask to its owner and rose to his feet.

"What about my being under arrest?" said one of the two officers to the other, as the Adjutant waited impatiently for them to resume their march.

"What arrest?" asked the other. "I've forgotten."

CHAPTER XIII

THE SERIOUS SIDE OF WAR

The Medical Officer and the transport officer, under the watchful eye of the Adjutant, now resumed their march.

"Meddlesome fellow this Adjutant man," said the Medical Officer to the transport officer, who was silently shuffling along in the mud.

The transport officer said nothing. Probably he felt that any remarks he made would strain too far the slender framework of the Adjutant's temper.

Meantime the Adjutant strafed the Medical Officer and the transport officer indiscriminately, until they finally began to feel like a pair of schoolboys caught in some flagrant misdemeanour.

"I must say, Adj., I don't think your temper improves with the rain. I shall have to ask the medical detail to sing, in order to drown your remarks," declared the Medical Officer.

"Well, you two may have been quite happy sitting in the ditch there, but what about our kits and rations?"

"Kits and rations! You talk to us of kits

and rations, when two of your smartest officers were lost, and for all you knew to the contrary, might have been lying dead on the roadside; and all you want is kits and rations! Why, we might have died a hundred times," exclaimed the Medical Officer.

"Yes," said the transport officer, "and been buried by the robins like the babes in the wood."

"If you'd come along and found two decomposing corpses in the ditch, then you might have been sorry," added the Doctor.

"I thought you knew the way," said the Adjutant, who now appeared more anxious to mollify the two stragglers.

"Thought! He actually thought!! Give it up. Leave thinking to the educated classes—myself, for instance, and 'Pills' here," the transport officer suggested loftily.

"Yes; and how, may I ask, could we be expected to know the way, when the Battalion Headquarters keep all the maps?" the Medical Officer inquired.

"Well, you don't know how to read a map, anyhow, so you don't need to grumble."

This was so perfectly true that the Medical Officer for a few moments was reduced to silence, thinking over a suitable retort. The rain meantime, which had for some hours been falling with a steady drizzle, now attained to a solid downpour. The three officers, followed by the stretcher-bearers

and transport, marched on in silence, splashing through the puddles and conscious of nothing but the general wetness of their surroundings, and the rain which drove against their faces and found its way in a thin trickle down their necks.

"Certainly the German Emperor has a lot to answer for, bringing me out on a night like this," said the Medical Officer, as a sentry, stationed in front of a nebulous and indistinct farm-house, challenged them out of the darkness.

In a decayed farm they found the Battalion Headquarters; and in the house the Colonel had taken up his quarters. Companies were scattered round in dugouts, which some maintained to be shell-proof, but which were just as certainly not rain-proof. The headquarter details occupied the various barns and outhouses, where they reposed in different degrees of sodden discomfort. Here they lay on the stone floors amid the wet straw, while the rain dripped down upon them through gigantic holes in the roof.

The Pompadours were in support, and the orderly-room, in close and earnest communication with Brigade Headquarters, noted down an exhaustive programme of working and wiring parties. On our left the Highland Brigade, reinforced since the disastrous days up north, were reported to be attacking some letter on the map apparently agitative to the minds of the general staff. Only a letter and a number—nothing more. Certainly

there appears to be no limit to the usages of modern warfare, but really this seems to be carrying the thing too far. The other ranks one has had to get into the habit of regarding as so many numbers; the horses also have their ciphers seared into their hoofs; even the waggons are indexed. But now we have to accustom ourselves to another form of nomenclature.

A spire seen on the horizon ceases to be known as the Church of Marins: it is now J. 34. A hill seen for the first time in the distance, we are informed, is H. 15; a ruined farm-house beyond the Hun trenches is Y. 4. On the present occasion the Highland Brigade are concentrating their attention to a particular spot which doubtless will go down to posterity as U. 2.

We wonder, when the fight is over and the prizes come to be issued, if there will be a medal clasp with U. 2 written on it ?

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." So, I presume, it's just as satisfactory to be killed storming U. 2, as to be knocked on the head climbing up the Heights of Abraham. Gravelotte, Austerlitz, Balaclava, Mars-la-Tour, Vionville, Borodino, are all fine, rolling, high-sounding titles, and in the mention of them there is something of the rush of battle and the thunder of big guns—but U. 2 ! ! Help !

I ask you, does it not sound pathetic, like the chirping of a chick looking for its mother round

the edge of a Belgian midden? It rings like the title of one of Ouida's books; on paper it looks like an answer to an algebraic problem; and on a clasp—oh, help!

Yet U. 2 has a meaning of its own to our Highland Brigade, and over U. 2 more good Canadian lives were lost than at Batosch, Ticonderoga, and Paardeburg for all rolling grandeur.

The Highlanders were not alone on this business—the Eastern Brigade were in it, too; and as we sat in sloppy discomfort in our shattered farmhouse, the guns—our guns—roared overhead, and rifles and machine-guns cracked and sputtered, as the attack developed, and the whirl of battle rolled forward. Of course, there was nothing to be seen; there seldom is in a modern battle. The more interested among the Pompadours, and that generally meant the newly joined, paced up and down the high-road watching the German fireworks and listening to the guns and rifles.

"God pity us poor soldiers on a night like this!" murmured War-horse McMutchkin as he pulled his dripping blanket round his neck in a vain attempt at slumber. "What's this they've done, cutting off the rum ration? I could just do with a hauf yen."

The perfumed stillness of the spring night, as I have heard it called, was rent with the roar of cannonading, yet the Pompadours slept sound and undisturbed. Two thousand yards away

a very pretty battle was taking place, and out there in the flash of the falling lights men were dying; but it was not our scrap, so why worry? Our own part was still to come, so, for the present, let us sleep, dreamless and sound, forgetful of our sodden clothes and the general sloppiness of our surroundings. There will be work, and that in plenty, for us on the morrow.

The morrow dawned, and with the dawn came the sun, warming us and drying the moisture from our wringing clothes. Under the fruit-trees, gay with the blossom of apple and pear, the orchard had the appearance of a gigantic drying-shed. Clothes and blankets lay everywhere! In the stream that wandered along two sides of the orchard we performed our toilets, and with the sun our troubles vanished and our hopes rose.

In front of us lay the village of St. Albert, and as the day wore on, working-parties, armed with pick and shovel, moved down the road to carry out the behests of Brigade Headquarters.

For most of us, however, it was a day of rest, and of waiting.

Behind the house the Medical Officer was engaged, mixing some choice decoction in a biscuit-box.

"What horror is that you're playing with?" asked Captain Wales, as he passed, going in the direction of the orderly-room.

Bill Mavis, now promoted to the dignity of

sanitary policeman, sniffed audibly, as he appeared to study the foliage of an overhanging bough of an adjacent apple-tree.

"Some dope for sick 'orses, that is; 'e's not an 'orspital docter—'e's an 'orse docter."

"This is the very latest, old thing—straight from the stables," remarked the Medical Officer in answer to Captain Wales's question.

"I thaut so, a-'andling sick 'orses 'e is," murmured the sanitary policeman to the apple-tree.

"What the devil are you mumbling about, Mavis? What are you doing there—looking for birds'-nests?"

"No, sir; no birds'-nests in this 'ere tree. I thaut that there might be the dope you give me on board ship w'ere I 'ad a sore back."

"Go and build an incinerator, and when you've done that dig a garbage pit, and then go and construct a swill sink; and then, if you're not dead from exhaustion, you can go birds'-nesting. Only go."

"That creature," said the indignant Medical Officer to Captain Wales, "worries me. He's always messing round the horse lines, and when he finds one of them sick he comes for me. I believe he thinks I'm a vet."

"Well, he's probably judging by the way you treated him. I shouldn't wonder if he's right. But what's this mess?"

"Mess? Nothing; this is for the respirators."

"What—have I got to shove my nose into that?"

"Yes, certainly."

So it was the case. Already within a few weeks of the first gas attack, everybody had been provided with respirators; flimsy, inadequate contrivances they appear to us now in comparison with the well-conceived apparatus with which we are these days supplied, yet, as it happened, wonderfully efficient.

These respirators, made of cotton waste and widow's weeds, had to be dipped periodically in solution, and it was this noisome mixture which at the moment our quack was experimenting with. The Doctor was perusing a blue paper held firmly in the right hand, while his attendant minions, armed with sundry wooden boxes and sandbags and a large tin can, added the various ingredients as the different amounts of chemicals were read out.

Captain Wales was perfectly right: it certainly looked a mess.

"Um! I suppose it's all right," the Medical Officer remarked doubtfully. "It certainly does look like sheep-dip; I wonder if the blue paper's all right?"

"It looks a bit queer," Private Lavigne agreed, as he reflectively stirred the contents of the biscuit-box around with a broom-handle. "Private Mavis was a-sayin'——"

"Private Mavis is at present digging a refuse

pit for saying too much; and if you mention his name in my presence, you'll go and join him. Go and tell Captain Wales we're ready to commence the dipping." Perhaps it was the sun, but the Medical Officer was certainly very short-tempered!

The companies filed past, dipping their respirators in the fluid, and the colour in the mournful crepe dyed the contents of the biscuit-tin so that it became tinted like an ink-bottle. Major Meldrum —who was no longer a Major, but a Lieutenant-Colonel—stood by watching, while the men wetted their respirators. Some of the reinforcements may have been at first inclined to wonder at the amount of interest displayed by the senior officers in this process, but those same officers had still very freshly in their minds the memory of those days not yet a month ago. They had seen the insidious ravages of that silent creeping green cloud, and had watched their blue-faced men coughing, gasping, and dying in its suffocating grasp. Surely they had good cause to take an interest.

That night there were working-parties, and "C" and "D" Company marched through the village of St. Albert just before dark; and the Bosches, to keep things lively, squirted the main street with shrapnel. Captain Wales, who was leading, ordered the men to double through this zone of unhealthiness, and the Medical Officer, who was following behind with some of his body-

snatchers and a wheeled stretcher, heavily loaded with various articles of his craft, was left hopelessly in the rear.

"I thought it sed in the Harmy Hact that the rite of march was reg'lated by the slowest soldier," remarked Private Lavigne.

"So it iss, my boy," assented the War-horse.

"Well, this ruddy harmy's run away an' left us."

"I guess they don't count us as soldiers; we're only details—goldarned corpse-revivers," commented Private Freeborn.

The stretcher-bearers sheltered under the lee of the gable of a house until the rainstorm of metal quieted down—that is, with the exception of the War-horse and Freeborn. On an order from the Medical Officer, they doubled through the ruined village in the wake of the companies, to render such help as was possible in case of accidents. Presently the shelling quieted down, and the wheeled stretcher resumed its interrupted progress. The street was long and straggling, and in the struggling moonlight showed ample evidence of the treatment that had been meted out to it in the preceding months. Hardly a house appeared to have a roof, and some, in their tottering downfall, lay sprawling across the street.

The artillery was for the moment silent, but from the left came a continuous patter of rifle-fire. Occasionally a stray bullet, finding a gap between two houses, flicked across the street, but for the

most part the stretcher-bearers progressed in comparative security.

A tall figure suddenly appeared in the middle of the fairway in front, pausing from time to time to look around him or to gaze upwards to the sky.

"Hullo, Padre!" exclaimed the Medical Officer; "are you lost?"

"No, I'm just admiring the beautiful stars."

"Oh, then you must be lost."

"No, I'm just enjoying the night."

"Gawd! 'e must 'ave been drinking," remarked the irresponsible Lavigne in an undertone. "Found some rum, 'e 'as."

"I was just locating the positions of the dressing-stations," continued the godly one; "one never knows when such knowledge will be useful. Where are you to be?"

"Please, sir, I feel awful queer," suddenly complained Lavigne, confronting the Medical Officer.

"What do you mean?"

"Dunno, sir; I've gone faint all over."

"Turn round to the light."

In the pallid light of the fitful moonbeams the upturned face certainly did look white; furthermore, the sufferer was making a variety of regurgitative rumblings in his throat, which seemed to come from deep down in his interior.

"My poor boy!" said the kind-hearted Parson, putting his arm round the now tottering private.

"Here, sit down, while I give you a little stimulant."

Without further invitation Private Lavigne seated himself on a fragment of broken masonry, and idly and expectantly regarded the clergyman, who now produced a metal flask from his hip-pocket.

Then McSpeldron, from his place between the handles of the stretcher, surveyed the scene in speechless amazement, while wonder at Lavigne's duplicity, and annoyance at his own want of initiation, struggled for mastery in his breast.

"Here, take a sip of this," said the Padre. The flask changed hands, was eagerly clutched, and the rapidity with which it was carried to the sick man's lips seemed to argue a small degree of faintness.

"Ugh! It's 'ot; it's burning me"; and the flask fell on the road.

"What's the brand, Padre?" asked the Medical Officer as Lavigne struggled to his feet.

"Spirits of ammonia; I told him just to take a sip."

"Feel better already, don't you, Lavigne?" The Medical Officer turned to the now rapidly recovering patient. "How about relieving McSpeldron in the shafts? Good-night, Padre; I'll be careful how I accept drinks from you in future. Fall in, Medical Detail; get a move on."

Just beyond the cross-roads was situated the regimental aid post of the Prairie Rifles. Here

they found Captain Wales nursing a bullet in his right arm. On entering the village he had been hit by the first burst of shrapnel, but continued to lead his company until he fell in with the Engineer officer who was supervising the work for the night. Having found his objective, and not before, he handed over the working-party to the second in command, and then sought the dressing-station.

"Hullo, Pills! This ought to be good for a month or two."

"Beast!" rejoined the Medical Officer without a trace of good manners. "Some people certainly seem to have all the luck."

"Yes, it's certainly a peach," remarked the Doctor of the Prairie Rifles, as he finished binding up the wounded extremity. "Missed the bone missed the artery, and ought to be good for two months up the river at least. Think of the river in June, my lad."

Outside on the road the stretcher-bearers waited with the wheeled stretcher, The McSpeldron grimly reminiscent at the thought of Lavigne's unsuccessful endeavour to obtain spirituous comfort from the man of God, while the other sat against the wall sucking the inevitable "as you were" cigarette.

"S'pose we're 'ere for the next 'arf-'our? Gone in for a drink, 'e 'as."

"What would you be wanting now, Alfred

Lavigne? What would you say to another drop out of the Parson's bottle?" questioned the polite McSpeldron.

Before the querulous Lavigne could reply to this intended insult, the door of the dressing-station opened and the Medical Officer again appeared.

"Hullo, Lavigne! I thought you told me a short time ago that you were feeling ill? You must be better if you're able to smoke one of those coffin-nails."

"I'm still abaht 'arf dead, but"—this with the air of a hero—"I'll try to carry on"—struggling to his feet.

"Good. Well, what you want is a little gentle walk to cool your brow."

"'Ow d'yer mean?"

"This. Over there"—the Medical Officer vaguely indicated the country-side which receded in the darkness towards Germany—"our two companies are digging a trench. You will go over there, give Lieutenant Allonby this note, and send back Private Freeborn with an answer. You will remain with Private McMutchkin and look after anyone who happens to get hurt."

"'Orl right; but supposin' I die on the way?"

"You won't die; but if you do, we'll have you carefully embalmed and give you a grand funeral. I dare say McSpeldron will lend you his cross";

and the doctor again disappeared inside the dressing-station.

" 'E ain't got no 'art. I guess Bill Mavis is abaht right: 'e ought to look after sick 'orses. 'Orses ? Naw. Sick pigs is abaht 'is mark "; and silently and sorrowfully the deeply injured Lavigne departed into the palpitating darkness.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREY MAN

"This place ought to do all right, Sergeant Bowden? It's the only place we've seen with a roof," remarked the Medical Officer, as the stretcher-bearers came to a halt.

In the grey dawn the medical detail hovered in a state of yawning expectancy outside a small house, which appeared to be an appendage of a long, low, roofless building facing the main road of St. Albert. Here had been the Bosche, as the loopholed walls and the ornamental trellis-work of barbed wire facing to the west bore witness to: but here had also been the British, and at a more recent date, as the gaps in the defences showed.

To the east, across half a mile of open country, lay the trenches, stretching like a great wall of China across the landscape. For here the ground was soft, and the trench was no trench at all, but a barricade. It was over and beyond this rampart that the events of the day were to materialize, and therefore the Medical Officer stuck out his shingle in the main street, and waited the arrival of his patients.

The Brigade was attacking at dawn, and already the wave of the artillery preparation was breaking itself against the German front line.

The stretcher-bearers were busy carrying in their various stage properties, which the sergeant, who was always a martinet for neatness, proceeded to pile in well-dressed rows. At the back of the house the crackle of burning sticks betokened the fact that the cook had already lighted a fire in anticipation of a morning cup of tea. Private McMutchkin, armed with a borrowed broom, was sweeping out the new dressing-station, while The McSpeldron and Freeborn bent their backs as they moved the biscuit-box containing the day's rations from the wheeled stretcher to the cook's fire.

A pallid dawn, with the gloomy clouds reluctantly turning to a mournful grey. A misty, ominous morning, with threatening cloud-banks in the western sky.

The Medical Officer, standing in the doorway, surveyed the shattered bleakness of the village street in silence. Along the road coming from the trenches three men were advancing, the cloudy mistiness rendering them indistinct in the growing light. Gradually, as they approached, the details became more distinct. Two of the figures were in khaki; the third, walking slightly in front, was dressed in grey of a blurred indefiniteness, which seemed to fade away in the general dulness of the surroundings.

"Ha, a German prisoner!" remarked the Medical Officer; "Sergeant Bowden, tell the cook that we'll be having guests for breakfast."

The three figures drew nearer, the grey man leading, with his chest thrown out and his head held high. He appeared pompous rather than defiant, and walked with his toes turned far out, as if his boots hurt him. On his head was perched a small brown cap edged with red, and he was enveloped in a long grey coat that bore a strange resemblance to a dressing-gown. A pair of high boots, which seemed many sizes too large for him, completed his costume, and his left hand was bound in a bandage.

"Good-morning," said the Medical Officer. "Come inside. Where are you taking him to, corporal?"—this to the N.C.O. from the Assiniboians who was in charge, and who, along with the other escort, was standing leaning on his rifle.

"To Brigade Headquarters."

"Well, what about a cup of tea while we dress his wound? You all look as if it wouldn't harm you."

"What about it?" answered the corporal, as they entered the dressing-station.

Inside, the three guests were provided with seats on a long bench. The German at first appeared undecided as to what was expected of him. He stood in the corner of the room, dressed in his preposterous greatcoat, eyeing the khaki-

clad figures around him with interest and expectation. His uniform was plastered with mud, and he certainly had a most wonderful black eye. It clung to his cheek, swollen and purple like an overripe damson. For the rest he was unshaven, and had been for weeks, with a long brown beard like an Assyrian king's.

"Where did you get him?" asked the Medical Officer of the corporal.

"Who? Whiskers here?"

"Yes, Whiskers here, if by that you mean your prisoner."

"We got him in the trench which the Assiniboians attacked this morning. He was asleep when we took the trench, and woke up to find we'd got him."

"A cheerful awakening," commented the Medical Officer; then, turning to the prisoner: "Why don't you sit down?"

The prisoner indicated that it was not the custom to sit down in his country in the presence of an officer.

"Nonsense," said the Medical Officer. "You're not in Germany now. What will you drink—tea, coffee, cocoa, or bovril? You'd better take tea; I've taught them how to make it." It took time, I confess, to convince the cook that tea is an infusion and not the usual vile decoction which simmers on the fire for half the day, and tans your stomach into boot-leather."

The prisoner probably comprehended only a

small part of the foregoing harangue, but condescended to take tea.

"Have some rum in it? I believe it's a custom in your country."

At that moment Lieutenant Ridge, our bombing officer, appeared in the doorway, his head in a sling and his uniform in tatters. He smiled cheerfully to the company.

"Hullo, Doctor! Can you fix me up?"

"Certainly; only I would suggest a tailor's shop. What happened?"

"Oh, we were a preliminary bombing attack, and got rather roughly handled; I know I'm wounded in the back, and I think in the side too, and I had my clothes nearly blown off me."

Lieutenant Ridge on a chair, and the prisoner on the bench, had their wounds bound up at the same time.

"Where do you come from?" asked the smiling Lieutenant in faultless German.

"From over there"—indicating the trenches.

"Yes, no doubt; so do I, for that matter. But which part of Germany? What city?"

"From Blankenburg in the Hartz Mountains."

At once the Lieutenant's thoughts went back to a period many years before. He remembered a certain small boy who had lived in a small country town in Germany and attended the local school.

"What is your name?"

"Heinrich Schenck."

"It can't be, and yet it must," murmured Lieutenant Ridge: "the son of the watchmaker." And again he remembered how, during the days at the commencement of the South African War, and more especially during that time which was known as the black week, he had felt the pangs of utter loneliness. How the stupid, clumsy German youths around him had rejoiced at the check which the British arms had received, and how the schoolmasters had made no effort to hide their own and their charges' jubilation over the series of disasters on the Modder and at Colenso. There was only one sympathizer in the town to whom he could talk during those bad days, and that was a certain Heinrich Schenck, the son of a watchmaker. Well, that was many years ago, and there seemed very little resemblance between the dirty, frowsy German infantryman, nursing his wound and sipping his cup of tea, and the idle, jaunty Heinrich in the gorgeous Berlin raiment who had been at once the delight of the girls of Blankenburg and the despair of his parents.

The Lieutenant wondered, could this be the same Heinrich who alone in the town showed him any kindness during the black week? When even Georg, the little Danish ally who used to cover his copybooks with wonderful drawings of Danish cuirassiers hewing their way through crowds of Prussian infantry, gave up his favourite pursuit and occupied himself drawing entirely imaginary

and utterly grotesque Highlanders retreating before faultlessly attired Dutch farmers. Georg was never impartial in his drawings; the Danish cuirassiers had always been depicted with regular features and wonderfully symmetrical figures, so the Boers appeared in turn clean-shaven, with their nails neatly manicured, and their boots carefully blackened. The Highlanders, however, shared the lot of their German predecessors, although, whereas the latter showed a tendency to rotundity and shortness of limb, the former ran rather to a half-starved lankiness. In any case, the result had been unfortunate for the lonely schoolboy. Georg, honoured and feted in the ranks of the enemy whom he had formerly ridiculed, and forgetful of his alliance, added greatly to the weight of his afflictions. It was then, the Lieutenant reflected, that Heinrich, divining the utter loneliness of the small exile, came to his assistance, going out of his way to do him a kindness.

Heinrich and little Marie. For the moment he had forgotten Marie.

"When am I going to be shot?" It was the prisoner who spoke.

"Shot?" answered the Lieutenant. "Shot? Why, what do you mean?"

The prisoner seemed at first uncertain as to how he should answer this last question; finally he ventured: "Our officers told us the British killed all their prisoners."

"And are your wonderful officers always correct in everything they tell you?" remarked the Medical Officer, who had overheard this part of the conversation, and rather prided himself on his knowledge of the German tongue.

"No, not always."

"Well, it may interest you to know that you're not going to be shot. Your troubles are now over, and presently you will be sent to Great Britain." The Medical Officer never would allow that such a place as England existed. "You'll get three square meals a day and the joy of living in the Isle of Man. Think of it! Douglas and the Christy Minstrels, and Pierrots on the pierhead in the evening, and the trippers looking at you through the bars as you wander round the bullpen. You'll just be in time for the summer season. Allow me to congratulate you. Your chances of dying of old age are much rosier than mine."

"Shut up, Doctor, and let me get a word in," said Lieutenant Ridge. "How is Fräulein Marie Momme?"

"Fräulein Momme? Why, she is quite well; but she is no longer Momme, she is Braumuller."

"What, do you mean to say she married the innkeeper? Poor Marie!"

"Did you know her? It was considered a good match. She had no money; he had plenty. They are rich, and she has four children."

"Yes, and he was fifty-six inches round the waistbelt—more German frightfulness. Heavens! he was an ugly swine."

The prisoner was rapidly getting over his first appearance of alarm, and betrayed a certain interest in Ridge's remarks.

"Well, tell me, what of her father, Herr Momme? Does he still make the same wonderful cherry tarts that he used to?"

"No, he's dead since four years."

"And she very imprudently married the barber, I mean the publican. Poor Mariechen! We used to get up at 4 a.m. and gather cherries for her father's tarts. I was very much in love those days," the Lieutenant murmured. "Do you remember your lessons in English from Frau Goette?" he added aloud.

"What English lessons? How comes it that you know?"

"Know? Why, the British Army knows everything. Didn't you know our intelligence system was perfect?"

"Yes, but how do you know about Frau Goette, Herr Braumuller, and the rest?"

"That is all part of our system."

"Ah! So," answered the German.

"Now tell me. Who's winning this war—we or you?"

"I think we win."

"Why do you think so?"

"Well, our officers tell us so, and our papers say the same thing."

"But you surely don't believe either the one or the other? What do you think yourself?"

"Well, one doubts at times very much."

"Look at these soldiers here." The Doctor was busy bandaging up a wounded man, but on hearing Lieutenant Ridge's remark, paused and listened to the conversation, filled with pride at hearing his stretcher-bearers thus classified as soldiers. "They all look as though they are enjoying themselves. Remember, they are all volunteers."

"Yes," said the Medical Officer, as he finished the bandaging, "have a look here"—pointing to the rations for his twenty men and lying like a stoat. "That's a day's rations for eight men. Look at that beef, the finest sirloin steak." In turn he demonstrated the bread, the butter, the bacon, and jam.

"Here's the daily paper printed yesterday morning in London, and we get letters every day. Can you beat that?"

"No, we do not do that; we only receive letters twice a week, and I have not seen a paper for a fortnight."

"Then you aren't exactly enjoying the war over there?" the Lieutenant continued.

"No, that, not. But how comes it that you know all about Blankenburg and the people there?"

"Ah, that I told you is all part of our noble intelligence scheme," remarked the Lieutenant, rising. "Say, Doc., is my back bound up sufficiently to allow me to return to the fray?"

"You're not returning to any fray," answered the Doctor, dwelling ponderously on the necessity for anti-tetanus and a trip to Blighty.

"Well, but I'm all right," remonstrated the wounded one.

"Yes, you're just fine for a base hospital and a trip across the Channel. When you're floating about on the river with a nice girl, you can think of me in a cellar, among all this smell and mess. "There's your ticket; I've given you a red one, so they'll fuss round you a bit more."

Finally the Lieutenant consented to have the way to the field ambulance pointed out to him.

"I'll look in at Brigade as I pass and give Ainslie and Theophilus the glad hand."

The prisoner and his escort had already taken their departure, and Lieutenant Ridge was about to follow.

"Say, Doc., think I impressed Fritz by my knowledge of his home town?"

"Somewhat. How did you do it?"

"I happened to be at school there. Eighteen years ago I and that whiskered gentleman were great friends."

"I don't think much of your taste."

"Oh, he was shaved in those days."

"Well, you are a priceless humbug; you might have told him."

"I don't feel much inclined to tell a German anything these days, except what would probably shock you if you heard it."

"Pity we couldn't have let him loose and sent back to his pals. He'd have seen what a splendid bunch of stretcher-bearers I have."

"Yes, that spiel of yours about the rations and the morning papers fairly got him going."

"Yes, if he told them about our grub, they'd be following the rats across to our trenches in search of better rations."

"Well, good-bye, Pills."

"Good-bye, old thing. Give my regards to Leicester Square and my love to all the fair ones."

Down the village street Lieutenant Ridge overtook the German prisoner, marching along stolidly in front of his escort.

"Let me see: you were exempt from military service on account of flat feet and varicose veins?"

"Yes, but how?"

"Never mind, Heinrich; après la guerre," answered the Lieutenant as he departed on his way.

CHAPTER XV

GATHERING IN THE SHEAVES

The Padre had arrived at the dressing-station, and proceeded to unpack a collection of sandbags with which he was burdened, displaying a variety of canonical comforts, hot-water bottles, sleeping-socks, Bibles, and the like. He was in rather a perturbed state of mind. He wanted to go up to the front line, but certain considerations deterred him. In his pocket was the latest blossom of his genius—a poem about the Kaiser, and he had no desire to fall into an unappreciative enemy's hands with it in his possession.

"What's it all about, Padre?" said the Medical Officer. "Read it to the wounded chaps here; it will do them good."

The Padre consented to comply with this request, and produced the priceless gem. After a few lines the Medical Officer halted him abruptly.

"That's enough for the present; you'd better stop, or all the wounds will go septic."

"Well, may I give it to one of the wounded to take with him to hospital, and then, when things are quieter, he can send it back to me," said the Padre.

None of the wounded were having any, so the man of God was in a hopeless dilemma. He wanted to go to the trenches, but feared what might happen to him if an enemy, lacking in a sense of humour, found the manuscript in his pocket.

"Nothing for it, Padre, but to learn it off by heart and swallow it," the Medical Officer remarked.

Finally a compromise was reached; the Padre retained his manuscript and remained in the dressing-station labelling the wounded, and directing the ambulance cars outside. At this he is singularly adept; he must have served his novitiate in the New York Police. Also he is good at the labelling business, and the clear, firm hand with which he writes his sermons, for he is a clergyman and not a meenister, had entered up a multitude of woe.

Meantime the fight progresses. Colonel Meldrum at the corner of Yew Street, seated behind a straw-stack, directs the operations, for at the moment the Officer Commanding the Assiniboians has been laid out. Down on the road beside the stack are the remains of four men killed by a shell. The enemy are paying a lot of attention to this road; evidently they expect that reinforcements will go up that way. Shells fall all around, big ones that blast their way into the ground with a mighty roar and much black smoke.

"That's a dud," remarks the Adjutant as a shell hits the stack, failing to explode. Half a ton of straw, loosened by the buffet, falls on the head of the telephone operator as he crouches in the lee of the stack, burying him and his instrument. The signaller is quickly resurrected, and discovered with his telephone still to his ear. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with the telephone service.

Another dud strikes the stack, this time burying the Quartermaster, who has ventured so far to see the Colonel about a pea-soup ration, in an avalanche of straw. He is with difficulty unearthed, and as he again finally attains to the light of day is heard to mutter: "John MacIntosh, you've been seeking excitement all your days. Now you've got it, how the hell do you like it?"

The Brigade has been attacking since dawn, the Assiniboians in the van, the Pompadours supporting them and aiding them with working parties. The phone rattles busily; communication has already been established with the new front line that has been so lately German. The objective has been attained, but at a considerable cost.

The bombers of the Pompadours will most of them bomb no longer. Lieutenant Ridge, when he came down to the dressing-station with his uniform blown to ribbons and wounded in several places, was almost the only survivor—he and

Corporal Robertson. The corporal, when he saw that none of his own regimental anarchists remained on deck, transferred his activities to another unit, and remained with them bombing until the regiment was relieved.

Private Pollock of the Assiniboians, walking down the trench alone and unarmed but for a hand grenade, his rifle being smashed by a wandering bullet, found six Germans leaning on their rifles waiting to surrender. There must be some language of universal understanding, or maybe it was the look in the private's eye, for at a nod the six rifles were dropped and six docile Teutons preceded the indomitable Pollock down the trench.

Outside the dressing-station the tramp of feet is heard. A body of men appears, the transport officer at their head.

"What's this?" says the Medical Officer from the door of the dressing-station.

"Stretcher-bearers," says the transport officer briefly.

Half the transport is there and all the cooks, with the sergeant chef at their head.

"May I take them up?" says the Padre, as he finishes labelling a wounded man.

"Certainly," says the Medical Officer. "Rather you than me. It is going to be very objectionable up there. I'll give you Corporal Elliot to show you the best way. But what about your hymn of hate?"

" Buried, my boy, in a safe place."

Another party appears at the dressing-station; these are the stretcher-bearers from the field ambulance under Captain McCallum, bursting with enthusiasm and anxious to clear the front-line trench. The Padre departs for the scene of activities. No Cook's tour this, but a better use for his energies than a sheaf of sermons.

Up the main road and round the corner into Yew Street, where the Colonel is still directing operations, the Padre marches at the head of his party. The telephone service still works uninterruptedly. The Germans are throwing a lot of metal around, and Yew Street is still the unhealthy locality it was during the earlier part of the day; but the Padre on his mission progresses steadily. The Colonel and the Adjutant wave salutations to him and his stretcher-bearers. Here are a few wounded coming out, helping one another along, limping down the road and picking their way cautiously among the shell holes. There is the usual sprinkling of kits, some splashed and stained with blood, showing the places where men have already fallen wounded or dying; but gradually the features of the landscape are losing themselves in the falling darkness.

A large white wall looms up in the dark, stretching away in the gloom to either side. It is the great wall of China, the original British trench. They say the Guards built it during the winter

months. Certainly, if this is so, it is a memorial to their handiwork.

This was formerly our advanced position, but now we are far beyond. Here is Captain Cope; his company is in support. The Padre counts his company; two are missing, he is informed by Corporal Elliot. Two shrapnel wounds; no doubt already in the aid post, being bound up and awaiting shipment to England. The enemy are still busy, and dusting the barrier with shrapnel. Captain Cope and the holy one bend their heads before the blast. It is a marvellous demonstration of the art of accurate artillery fire. The Bosche is to be congratulated. No doubt he has registered on the parapet daily during the long winter months, and this is the culmination of his efforts. Certainly he has attained to a very pretty pitch of proficiency. Just at present, however, the Padre is filled with anything but admiration as he hugs the sandbags, his head bent as in an act of devotion, while the German shells burst just above the parapet!

The timing is wizardlike in its accuracy; the number of the shells is legion; but strange to say practically no one is hurt. The bursting fragments rain upon the sandbags, but mostly fly beyond. Heaven be praised for the good work of the Guards Brigade!

Beyond the barrier is a communication trench, or was in the days gone by. But here the con-

centration of hate has wreaked its will, and what remains of the trench gives little or no protection. Scattered along its channel are a few wounded, patiently awaiting their turn, and here the Padre's work begins. Among the mess of broken dugouts and disembowelled sandbags is strewn a welter of broken ammunition-boxes and shattered rifles, kits, bombs, and rations. Packs lie here with discarded greatcoats, thrown away as the troops pressed forward to the attack. Here, with the wounded, lie the dead. Not lying where they fell, but hastily placed on one side, the bodies lying on the smashed-up rampart of the trench, and forming a flimsy covering, at least in daylight, from the enemy's sight.

The Padre as he walks, crawls, and creeps forward, reflects on the utter ruthlessness of things. A year ago at this very hour he was seated comfortably on the veranda of his Western home, a day of satisfactory priestly work to his credit, rounded off by a satisfying meal. At this very moment he was, no doubt, inhaling the full fragrance of his post-prandial cigar, and gazing dreamily and appreciatively at the glowing sunset tints on the peaks of the eternal mountains across the placid bay. Then in his well-weeded garden, gay with the luscious tints of laburnum and lilac, everything was peace and quiet. Troubles he had none, beyond a natural anxiety as to the direction in which the fervid activities of the Methodists and

Presbyterians might turn, and the worry caused by a gradually increasing waist measurement.

Now here he is at the hour when, by well-established precedent, every self-respecting priest would normally be digesting his dinner, crawling like a cat amid a host of horrors, that assail and stagger all his senses at once. Yet, as he pauses, waiting for his stretcher-bearers to close up, he would not change places with that plethoric well-fed divine of a year ago! Yes, Padre, this is better work than presiding at mothers' meetings or attending choir practice, and when this present fight is over you will be all the more fitted to return home and engage in the pursuits of peace. Then when you face your flock arrayed in white vestments, to minister to their spiritual welfare, you will perhaps think of this your present band of sufferers, and how, with your clerical khaki plastered with mud and stained with blood, you brought them help and comfort in the shot-torn trenches at St. Albert. But, for the moment, the Padre is pure materialist. His thoughts are not of the good he is doing—that is all part of the day's work; but there is an all-satisfying, self-sanctifying understanding that is with him, permeating his whole being. His waist measurement is four inches less than it was at the same time last year.

The communication trench behind him, the Padre arrives in a fire trench. Here Lieutenant

Allonby meets him, and suggests a guide. Lieutenant Allonby has had more narrow escapes than anyone, and, according to all the rules of the game, should have already gone the way of all flesh, and yet is still very much alive.

"I'm glad to see you're still going strong, Allonby," remarks the Padre, to the Lieutenant sitting in the bend of the trench.

"Yes, Padre; I seem to be one of the lucky ones."

"Is this the front-line trench ?"

"No; there's another. We took it from the Germans this morning, but it's unhealthy."

The Padre's stretcher-bearers are now busy gathering in the wounded, and as party after party of four returns down the dilapidated communication trench the Padre finds his forces gradually diminishing. Finally he is left with Corporal Elliot and eight bearers. Following the guide provided by Lieutenant Allonby, he proceeds onwards. Here the dead lie thick, Germans mostly. They fill the remains of the trench, and are littered on the sides. To follow the trench means walking on the dead; so the guide, followed by the Padre, crawls across the open. The Hun is very active; rifle grenades, which burst before you know they are there, fall about promiscuously and with shattering report. The Padre hugs the ground when the German flares go up, and is finally in the forward trench. Just beyond is X. 19, and up there is an old German communica-

tion trench, half held by us and half by them. Across the interval is a hastily built parapet, and over this our bombers and the enemy engage in a friendly game of tennis! At the present moment the score stands at vantage in, as the Germans appear to have run out of grenades. The Padre's bearers are quickly provided with burdens, and the Padre, as he sees them disappear, walks along the trench. Here lies plenty of material for him to get to work on; the object of his visit is for the purpose of burying the dead. A relief is in progress. The Assiniboians and the Pompadours are leaving this hard-won trench, and the Mansion House Rifles are taking over. At an angle in the trench the Padre finds three sorely wounded men lying on stretchers. He sits on a box of small-arms ammunition, and watches the relief go by. What shall he do next? The stretcher-bearers are all gone; and there is still much work to be done. At the point where he sits, amid the ruins, things are fairly quiet for the moment, but all around rages a tempest of noise. To right and left and over in front of him are the German flares, illuminating, in their fleeting brilliancy, the white faces of the wounded men. The bank of tumbled earth beside which he sits was once the front of a German trench; now it is the back of ours, and over beyond this lies another something—trench, locality, or position—where the fight is still raging. The relief is finished,

the Assiniboians have moved down the trench, but the Padre and his wounded still remain. His guide, as is the way of guides, has also departed.

"Where do you think we are, Corporal Elliot?" the man of God asks.

The corporal modestly disclaims any knowledge of his whereabouts. The Mansion House Rifles are farther up the trench, but for a hundred feet the trench is deserted except for the dead and wounded, the Padre and the corporal. Suddenly a machine-gun rattles in the dark, and up the trench a rapid independent fire commences. "Here they come!" shouts a voice in the darkness, and at once the whole line is a flashing, sputtering blaze of rifle-fire, all except the silent empty gap, in the centre of which the Padre sits.

These are terrible longdrawn seconds, waiting for the foremost Hun to arrive, leaping lightly over the parapet. How will they treat him in the German prison? He wonders how he will put in the time waiting to be exchanged. Will he be exchanged? Perhaps he won't be taken prisoner. What about Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria? Undoubtedly this is dirty work at the cross-roads with a vengeance.

And what about Lieutenant Blair's letters? Who will be there to destroy those incriminating documents, written by half a dozen fair but different hands, supposing he and the Lieutenant should both appear on the casualty list? At least his

poem is safe—that can't be held up and used as evidence against him.

Gradually the firing is quietening down; to right and left of him the noise of rifles is dying away. A cheery voice hails him from along the trench; it is Captain McCallum from the field ambulance arriving with his party of bearers.

That night the Saskatoons moved forward to the attack. A deep ditch filled with barbed wire lay between them and the enemy, but this a party of the Pompadours had spanned with crazy wooden bridges. Across these slender footboards the attacking force moved under heavy fire, for the taking of G. 51 or W. 22, or whatever the unknown quantity might be. Here every dustheap had its machine-gun, and the storming party melted away before the driving storm of lead. But not before the object had been achieved, and another two hundred yards of hard-earned progress made. The dawn found the Saskatoons hanging on to their newly-won trench, while the artillery from behind plastered the landscape, ringing them in with a saving belt of slaughter. All that day the Pompadours remained in their trenches, pounded by high explosives under a hail of shrapnel. Casualties there were and many, and of these some we could ill spare. Lieutenant Allonby, who had been with the battalion from the beginning, was among the first to go, as he walked along the trench cheering his men as they hugged the saving sand-

bags. In the afternoon Captain Grosvenor was hit. In search of information, he had gone up to the front line through communication trenches which were but that in name. This was almost the worst loss the battalion could have suffered. Thus at St. Albert the Pompadours lost three more of their original officers—Grosvenor, Wales, and Allonby. Certainly the Colonel and Major Cope might feel that the sands were running out and the score piling up against them.

In St. Albert the Padre was at a loss. In the first place the dressing-station had disappeared. Some broken rafters, a pile of brick, the fragments of a stretcher, showed where the regimental aid post of yesterday had been. And there, buried under the pile of débris, lay the priceless gem of his imagination, his unsung hymn of hate. Manifestly it was so ordained, and thus a divine interference had tumbled his hopes with the falling of the house, burying his poetic fancies in a downfall of brick and mortar. Well, there it lay and there it will remain.

"The meek shall inherit the earth," murmured the Padre as he went his way.

Round the corner, at a strategically selected distance from the cross-roads, was the dressing-station; here the work was progressing in full swing. Over the lintel of the door of the thatched cottage the sign "Patet Omnibus" shed an air of classical mysticism on the interior. On a board

beside the door hung the non-committal notice, "Business as Usual until the Next Flitting." The Parson entered the house of suffering, but not of mourning.

Round the room were seated the wounded men waiting to have their hurts dressed, while in the centre the Medical Officer and the sergeant were bending over a stretcher case.

"Cheer-oh, Padre! Glad to see you back," said the Medical Officer.

"When did you move in here?"

"Just before the jolly old Germans hit the last spot."

"That was lucky."

"Not luck; Sergeant Bowden was entirely to blame. I think he's got second sight."

"How's that?"

"He always knows when the shell is coming that's going to wreck the happy home; it was the same of the last show. When he suggests quitting we flit P.D.Q. This makes five times, counting the last show, that we've got out as the shells came in at the other end of the building. This time he got his hunch rather late, and we lost some of our stuff."

"I don't think much of this place," remarked the Parson as he surveyed the plaster walls and the thatched roof showing in places between the broken laths. "It's hardly bullet-proof."

"No; it's rather like a bandbox. I'd swop it

for a haystack any day; but there's a good cellar across the road and some dugouts in the garden."

A stretcher case was coming along the road, and as the Medical Officer finished binding up the wounded man in front of him, the new arrival was in turn placed before him. A leg was fractured just above the ankle, but the owner appeared entirely happy. On the stretcher beside him, tied carefully to prevent them breaking away, were three German helmets.

"Can I take my helmets with me?" asked the man on the stretcher.

"Of course you can," the Medical Officer replied.

"Thank you, Doctor; I worked for them."

CHAPTER XVI

ALL IS VANITY

BACK in Laroche the Pompadours were comfortably occupying billets. Here they had arrived during the night from St. Albert, rather the worse for wear and with their ranks sadly thinned. These nocturnal meanderings always recoiled on the head of the Quartermaster, who was responsible for seeing to it that the night's lodgings provided for the regiment left nothing to be desired.

Everybody was always tired and dirty. Marching in to rest in the hot breathlessness of a summer's night induces a dustiness and stickiness which, combined with sore feet and thirst, are not conducive to a glow of brotherly love. On these occasions the medical, machine-gun, and signalling officers were always the most aggressive; they were more trouble than the whole of the rest of the battalion. It was a part of the ethics of the Pompadours, as pertains in all well-conducted regiments, that the officers would not see to their own comfort until the men under their command were all safely housed for the night, as well as circumstances permitted. Of course, this was

easy for the company officers; their men always had their billets allotted first, and the officers commanding, on arrival, after a cursory glance and a comprehensive and meaningless sniff, left their subalterns to carry on, and departed to their rest. With the poor old, often forgotten, always neglected details it was different. At times herded together, at times scattered through half a dozen town-sites, broken up in fragments and jammed in anyhow at the last moment, their officers fumed, snorted, and at times swore, not at, but about the Quartermaster, forgetful of their upbringing, and with merciless disregard to their own finer feelings.

There was always a feud between the signallers and the poultice-wallopers. The Medical Officer suffered from delusions of persecution, and thought they were perpetually trying to put one over him. He objected strenuously when, for reasons of internal economy, the signallers and medical forces were herded together, and on these occasions their blue and white arm bands had the same effect on him as a red rag to a bull. He would arrive at the village where the regiment was to billet in a tempestuous condition of dusty clamminess, with sore feet and a five-dollar thirst, and some time after midnight announce in strident tones that the medical forces were present and correct, and demand that they be put to bed instantly. If the Quartermaster was absent, his sergeant would endeavour to rise to the occasion

and handle the situation with becoming grace. The Medical Officer would suffer himself to be conducted to the billet. Here he would bid his men wait outside while he surveyed the proposed resting-place, and rapidly summed up its possibilities for comfort. Whether it was warm and dry, stuffed with clean straw, sufficiently ventilated and giving ample accommodation, was all the same; the quartermaster-sergeant would run over its manifest advantages as if offering a residence for sale, and not a shelter for the night. It made no difference if it had been the Empress Hotel: he would have been dissatisfied.

"Not fit to herd pigs into. Where's the Quartermaster?" Then the strafe would begin.

Generally, however, the Quartermaster, with Highland cunning, gave the gentle answer that turned away his wrath. A voice would greet the Medical Officer as he arrived, pitched in the tone of gentle solicitude.

"Is that you, Doctor? Man, I'm glad to see you; I was just waiting for you."

The medical detail would be halted, and the Medical Officer would suffer himself to be led away for the moment from the path of duty to the Quartermaster's quarters. Here a bottle of wine would be produced and a tumbler. The Medical Officer would be encouraged to drink. Meantime the quartermaster-sergeant would steal out under cover of darkness and lead the medical unit to their

resting-place. A few minutes later, the bottle being no more, the Medical Officer would remember his flock.

"What about billets, Mac ?"

"I'll show you them."

The Quartermaster would lead the way out into the road.

"They must have moved on," the wily one would say in tones expressive of mild surprise. "We'll go and have a look."

The stretcher-bearers would be found, some with their blankets spread, some already asleep, turning in for the night. On these occasions the billets were always "fine," "Buckingham Palace couldn't be better," and the Medical Officer would depart to his couch glowing with self-satisfaction and righteousness, and mellowed with wine and filled with a profound belief in the Quartermaster's capabilities.

Life was very much complicated those days by the scientific warfare we were indulging in. The gas had added greatly to the possibilities of the situation.

The orderly room telephone buzzed busily one morning.

"Someone to speak to you, sir," announced the telewagger on duty to the new Adjutant, who at the moment was wrestling with the customary multiplicity of returns that attend the first day out of the trenches. The Adjutant grabbed the earpiece.

"Yes; what's that you say? I can't hear. Oh! memorial prayers. Hold the phone half a minute. I'll send for the parson. No? What? Vermin sprayer! Oh, I understand—for the blankets. Shut up, you blighters! You might let a fellow hear himself speak." This to Lieutenant Black, the machine-gun officer, and Philomel of the signals, who had entered the orderly room and were engaged in the usual futile discussion regarding their respective billets.

"You might try again; I couldn't hear. No; only some hoboes here who know no better. What's that? Sprayer? Yes, I've got that—what's the other thing? You might spell it." Here the austere Gilbert possessed himself of a writing-pad, and exhaustively noted down the spelling of the word that was troubling him.

"What's it for? Well, hadn't you better speak to the Doctor? No; that's right. No; he never knows anything. Thanks very much. All right. Good-bye."

"What's that you're saying about me?" demanded the Doctor, who had entered the orderly room and overheard the last remark.

"Nothing, Pills. Only corroborating what they said at the other end."

"What did they say?"

"Only that you knew nothing much about anything."

"Who dared to say that?"

"Only the Ordnance Officer."

"What, MacIntyre? When I think of all I did for him when he was ill! The ungrateful wretch!"

"Well, that's probably the reason."

"You wait, Gilbert, until the next time you're sick."

"What do you know about—let's see, what's the word?" (Here the Adjutant consulted A.B. 153 B.) "Vermoral sprayers."

"Spell it."

The Adjutant complied.

"Oh, vermoral! That's an antiseptic, used for the mouth and nose," answered the Medical Officer, anxious to hide the fact that he knew nothing of the matter.

"In what cases?"

"Oh, any sort of cases. Sore throat, catarrh, tonsillitis—any old thing."

"What is vermoral?"

"One of the coal tar series," the Doctor answered readily, grasping at a straw.

"Will you let me spray your throat with it?" asked the machine-gun operator, joining in the conversation.

"Certainly not. You keep on with your job spraying the Bosche, and leave intellectual matters to myself."

"Well, have you ever used it?"

"No; it's an old-fashioned drug, and now hardly ever used."

"Doctor, I think you're a first-class liar," remarked the Adjutant judicially. "A vermoral sprayer is a new form of frightfulness for spraying the front-line trench."

"What with? Liquid fire?" asked the Medical Officer, realizing that his bluff had been called.

"No, liquid water."

"For the flies?"

"No, for the gas. Vermoral is not a substance; it's a man's name." This last was hazarded by the Adjutant, who, having a tall score chalked up against our medicine man, was anxious to make the most of his present opportunity.

"Well, I'll have one installed in the orderly room and keep you under the spray," the Medical Officer replied as he hastily left the room.

A few minutes after, the Medical Officer was hastening down the road on his horse *ventre à terre*, to ask of the authorities that he be kept better informed of new inventions in future, so as to obviate a recurrence of the ghastly display of ignorance to which the orderly room had just been subjected.

Later in the day we dipped respirators again, and as each man came up with his bundle of engine-room waste in the funereal crepe, the water was blue and the men's hands and faces were blue; but bluer by far was the air, for the Medical Officer had not forgotten his discomfiture of the morning at the hands of the Adjutant.

They were happy days in Laroche for the light-hearted, for a short two miles along the shaded poplar road lay our best-beloved Beaufort, at once the pleasantest, most picturesque and desirable of the cities we had visited. The serious-minded, however, found much to do. Of the combatant officers who had come with the battalion to France three short months before, only two remained with the battalion, Colonel Meldrum and Major Cope. The latter had just been promoted, and very fussy he was too about his title. The transport officer was always treading on his toes, by addressing him as Captain, and being threatened in return with arrest and all the summary penalties of the law. Not that the transport officer was much with us at this time. Ever since we had known him he had always rushed about like a fevered March hare, but just lately his movements had been more frenzied than ever. Rumour spoke of some frantically conceived deals in horseflesh, and the Quartermaster wandered around disconsolate and with his brow gathered in clouds of wrath. The transport officer appeared to have perpetual business elsewhere, and the lying jade told of visits to exalted quarters.

"I'll pull his head off like a fly," the Quartermaster threatened, "if he gets rid of any more of our horses for the skates he's taking on at present."

The Quartermaster was very bigoted in these matters. He was a close personal friend to each

of the horses, and used to talk to them intimately in Gaelic. In his spare time he was always to be found messing about the horse-lines, and the mules even were friendly to him. Those lop-eared misanthropes, who did more than their share of the hard work, seemed to have an understanding with him, quite apart from anyone else. The Quartermaster alone was suffered to approach their hindquarters with impunity, and to him it was vouchsafed even to lift up and examine an injured hoof, without having his brains plastered round the transport lines. The Adjutant suggested to the Quartermaster that they probably belonged to the same clan, but he was always making unprofitable remarks.

The Padre used to say that a mule has no pride in his ancestors, and no hopes regarding his posterity ! We always thought this a very brilliant remark, and used not to credit it with being original, but the Bishop maintained it was.

At times the Quartermaster would talk so affectionately and pathetically to his four-footed friends, that the Medical Officer would feel quite *de trop*. At these moments he would go over and talk to his own steed, the fairest of the fair. Him the Medical Officer called by the name of Rhubarb, but whether this was on account of his colour or because of his effect on the Medical Officer's liver, we could never be certain. His other horse, the humble associate of Rhubarb, whose duty was to

pull the Maltese cart, was named Ginger. This was no doubt on account of his associations; certainly his somnolent efforts in the advancement of the medical adjuncts of the battalion along the *pavé* roads hardly justified the choice of name. The Quartermaster's stud—for, despite establishment, he never descended to less than two chargers—he christened appropriately Mulligan and Jam-pot.

We must have been getting suspicious these days, or perhaps it was because of a tale which was going around. A certain battalion was said to have a horse of ill omen, and each officer in turn, who had him as a mount, came to a violent end. So certain was this that four of his unfortunate riders had already met the same fate. In the Pompadours we could only notice that at Misere our late Colonel's horse had sickened and died, and just before going in to St. Albert to attack, Grosvenor's horse was killed by a shell. The Quartermaster used to regard Jampot and Mulligan with grave solicitude. He was always sending urgent messages to the Medical Officer to come to the horse-lines to examine their pulses and take their temperatures, if he thought them a trifle distrait or dejected! Not that the Medical Officer knew anything about horses, but there is no doubt that had he professed to recognize any untoward signs of approaching dissolution in either charger, the Quartermaster would have gone sick instantly.

These memories are written of things which happened, as it now seems, long, long ago. The summer has gone, and after it the winter has followed in its course, bringing with it in its train mud and cold and discomfort. To-day the Pacific Pompadours are still at the first line, pacific only in name. They are now a war-worn regiment, but they are just as keen, just as cheerful, just as useful as when they met the gas at St. Jacques and fought through the days at St. Albert. Few who are mentioned here remain with them, but there is still one there—one whose every thought has been with the regiment and every wish for its welfare. Just as earnestly as he has fought the Germans so he has fought the doctors, and returned from spells of rest, induced by wounds, more earnest for the fray than ever before.

We who have known the Pompadours through all their ups and downs, in periods of rest and during the hurricane of war, can never think of the regiment, never speak of the days gone by, without at the same time remembering with a feeling of pride to have served under him, honour to have known him, and pleasure to have been with him, our leader, chief and friend, the Colonel.

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